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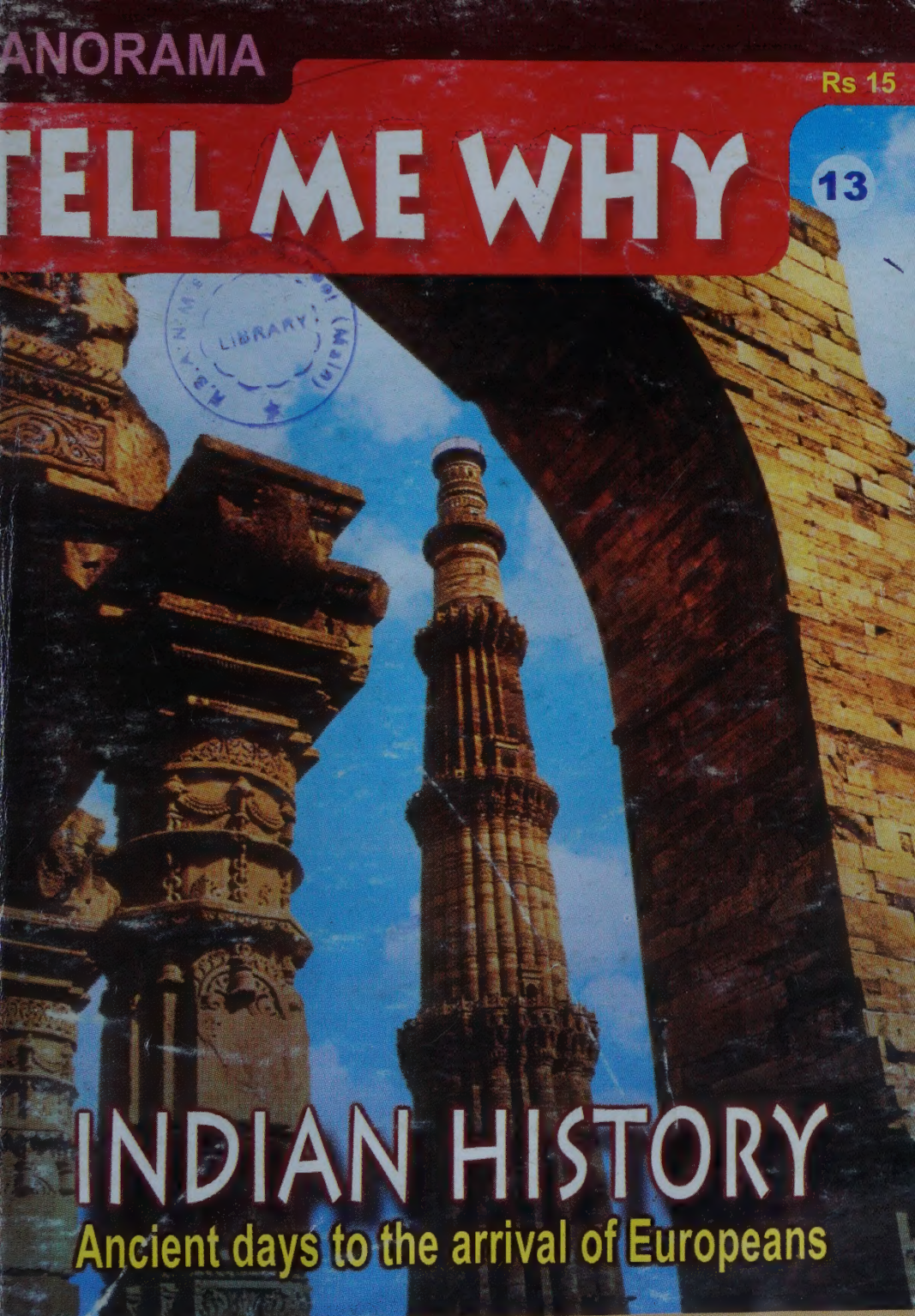


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MANORAMA

# TELL ME WHY

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## KEEP ON ASKING...

It's birthday time for TELL ME WHY!

Yes, this magazine from the house of Malayala Manorama, new in both concept and design, completes its first year of publication, this October.

That was a wonderful year of questions, and answers, too!

The Tell Me Why series handle serious subjects in a no-nonsense manner. At the same time, it managed to keep itself alive and interesting because each of its issues adopted the time-tested means of children everywhere to seek knowledge: to ask questions.

For many years, parents have craved for a magazine that would answer their young ones' countless questions. Manorama Tell Me Why is that perfect combination they looked for. It is indeed, a key to knowledge, for both children and parents. No wonder it has become a grand success within so short a time span.

This issue is about Indian History: spanning the period from the prehistoric era to the arrival of Europeans. We will cover the next part in another issue.

*Titles published so far:*

● THE SOLAR SYSTEM ● BIRDS ● INVENTIONS ● OCEANS
● ANCIENT WORLD ● CRICKET AND WORLD CUP ● ANIMALS
● PLANTS ● TRANSPORTATION ● 100 GREAT EVENTS
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FROM THE HOUSE OF MAGIC POT, MANORAMA YEAR BOOK, VANITHA, THE WEEK AND THE MALAYALA MANORAMA DAILY

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# THE PREHISTORIC ERA

## Why is the Palaeolithic era also called the Old Stone Age?

More than 2.5 million years ago, early man wandered from place to place in search of food. He lived mainly by hunting, and he killed animals with weapons made of stone. So, this era was called the Old Stone Age, and also the Palaeolithic era.

In those days, animals had the advantage over people. Animals like the deer and the leopard could run faster than man. Others had sharp claws and teeth to defend themselves, while animals like the elephant and rhinoceros were much stronger than man. Human beings had to somehow find ways to protect themselves and to kill animals for food. So, they learnt to make weapons from stones, and this marked an important step in the development of man.

## What is the meaning of the word Palaeolithic?

**The term 'Palaeolithic' sounds complicated, doesn't it? It is actually made up of two parts–'Palaeo' and 'lithic', and each part has a meaning.**

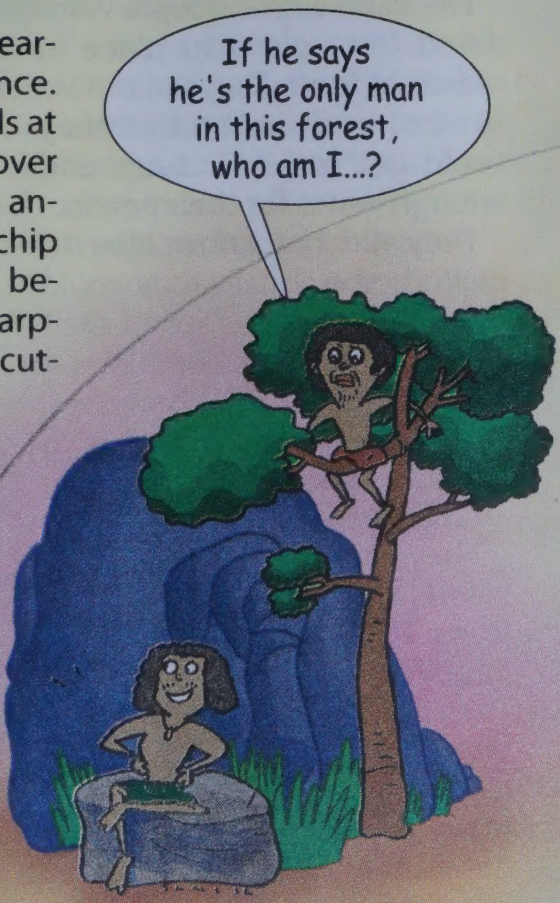
**'Palaeo' means old, and 'lithic' is derived from the Greek word 'lithos' which means stone. The earliest people all over the world are said to belong to the Palaeolithic Age because they used weapons made of stone. You can still see these weapons in many of the museums of the world.**

**Why did the Palaeolithic people use stones as tools? How did they make these tools?**

The Palaeolithic period is the earliest period of human existence. Man did not know about metals at that time. However, he did discover that by hitting one rock with another, pieces of stone would chip off, and the first rock would become sharp. He used this sharpened rock as an instrument for cutting and scraping.

Early man learnt to make fire by striking two stones together, and then, he used fire to split rocks to make his tools. Later, he learnt to make sharp points for arrow and spear heads. Gradually, wood was used to make handles for crude axes and hammers. Slowly, the tools made by man became more effective and efficient, not only in killing animals, but also in skinning dead animals. The skins were then used for protection against the cold.

Stone age tools have been found in hilly areas in present day Pakistan, Kashmir, Rajasthan, south Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and other parts of Peninsular India.



*A Palaeolithic rock painting*

## Why the Palaeolithic people didn't live in one place?

The Palaeolithic people wandered from place to place in search of food. They lived near streams or rivers, so that they could get rocks for tools and enough water for their needs.

They did not know how to build a home. Usually, they would live in caves or natural rock shelters. Gradually, Palaeolithic man used his tools to cut branches, and he used these branches to make a sort of roof over a simple arrangement of stones.

They ate the animals they killed, along with seeds and fruits. Their clothes were made of animal fur, leaves and bark. They lived from day to day, and yet there was beauty in their lives too, as can be seen from the many paintings they made on the walls of caves.

## Why is the Mesolithic Age called the Middle Stone Age?

The Stone Age actually consisted of three eras. The Palaeolithic era was the Old Stone Age. Then there was the New Stone Age, called the Neolithic era. In between the two, there was the Mesolithic era, which means the Middle Stone Age. (Meso means middle.)

The people of the Mesolithic era lived mainly by gathering food and hunting. They did not farm, use metal or build houses.

The Mesolithic people lived in

## STAR FACT

- **Age of Earth-4,600 million years**
- **Life started 2,000 million years ago**
- **Apes developed 25 million years ago**
- **Human-like creatures: Ramapithecus 14-10 million years, Australopithecus 5 million years, Homo erectus 2 million years, Homo sapiens or modern humans-35,000 years ago.**

caves. They made sharp tools from flint, bone, wood, antler etc. They domesticated dogs from wild wolves, took fish from the waterways, and managed to thrive, despite harsh living conditions.

The famous Bhimbetka caves near Bhopal belong to the Mesolithic Age. You can see beautiful cave paintings here, done with natural red and white pigments. These paintings show wild animals, hunting scenes, rituals and scenes from daily life of this era. Remains of the Mesolithic age have also been found in Bagor in Rajasthan.

### Why is the New Stone Age considered to be very important?

The New Stone Age, or Neolithic Age is considered to be very important because it marked the beginning of a more settled life for mankind. The earliest Neolithic settlements were discovered in the valleys of Iraq, Iran, Israel and Palestine.

One reason for this change was that it became harder and harder to find food just by gathering and hunting. Another reason was that the climate was becoming warmer and plants were growing well in this warm climate. So, people started to grow plants for food, and to herd sheep and goats. This meant that they had to stay in one place, and slowly the first villages began to appear.

*A neolithic rock painting*

## Why do we say the Neolithic Age ushered in a revolution?

About 10,000 years ago, in the Middle East, human beings learnt the skills of agricultural cultivation and raising cattle. This marked the beginning of the Neolithic era.

Man learnt that hunting wild animals and gathering fruits and plants were not the only way of getting food. They learnt to cultivate plants and domesticate animals. When human beings learnt how to produce their own food, their lives changed. This process is so important that we call it a revolution.

The first plants they cultivated were cereals. In India, it was mainly rice and wheat. The first domesticated animals were dogs, horses, goats, sheep and oxen.

People needed to live near fertile land to cultivate cereals. They stopped wandering to find food, and settled down in one place. They built villages, usually situated next to rivers. Their houses were built of sticks and mud, and the villages had fences to keep out wild animals.

So, the New Stone Age ushered in new ideas and a new way of life. But the move from a hunter-gatherer to a farming lifestyle did not take place overnight. It was a gradual process, a silent revolution that laid the foundation for life as we know it today.

## Why was Mehrgarh an important place in the Neolithic Age?

Mehrgarh finds a unique place in history because it was one of the earliest agricultural communities in the world. It was situated in Baluchistan, now in Pakistan, and is one of the earliest sites with evidence of farming. Wheat and barley

*Remains of an early farming village in Mehrgarh*

were grown, and the farmers kept herds of cattle, sheep and goats.

The people of Mehrgarh lived in brick houses, and stored their grain in granaries. They also learned to line their baskets with clay to make them waterproof.

Mehrgarh was occupied from around 7000

BC. Pottery, dating back to around 5000 BC was discovered there. Beautiful ornaments were also made from conch shells, lapis lazuli and turquoise beads.

The first evidence of drilling a tooth on a living person was also discovered in Mehrgarh!

## Which are the famous Neolithic sites in India?

In addition to Mehrgarh, other famous Neolithic sites in India are in Kashmir and Eastern Rajasthan. There were also settlements in the Indus Delta including Punjab and Haryana, Amri, Kot diji, Rehman dheri, Kalibangan and Banawali.

Burzahom was the first Neolithic site to be discovered in Kashmir. Burzahom means 'place of birch' in Kashmiri. This is because there are a lot of birch trees in the area. There is something unusual about the earliest Neolithic homes at Burzahom. They were below ground level. The people dug pits into the ground with the help of stone tools. They plastered the sides of the pits with mud. Living in these pits was a way in which the early Neolithic people of Burzahom tried to keep snug and warm in the bitterly cold winter.

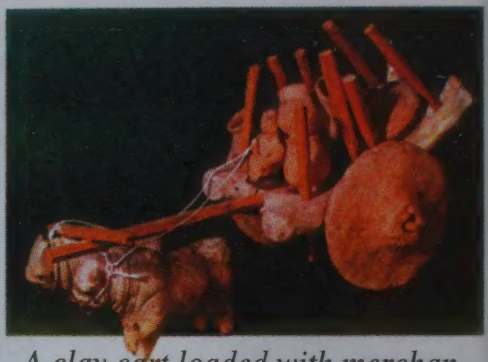
After the discovery and excavation of Burzahom, many other Neolithic sites were discovered in Kashmir at places such as Begagund, Gofkral, Hariparigom, Olchibag, Pampur, Panzgom, Sombur Waztal, and Brah. The types of houses and tools at these sites are similar to those of Burzahom. This shows us that the Neolithic cultures in different parts of our country had their own special features.

# INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

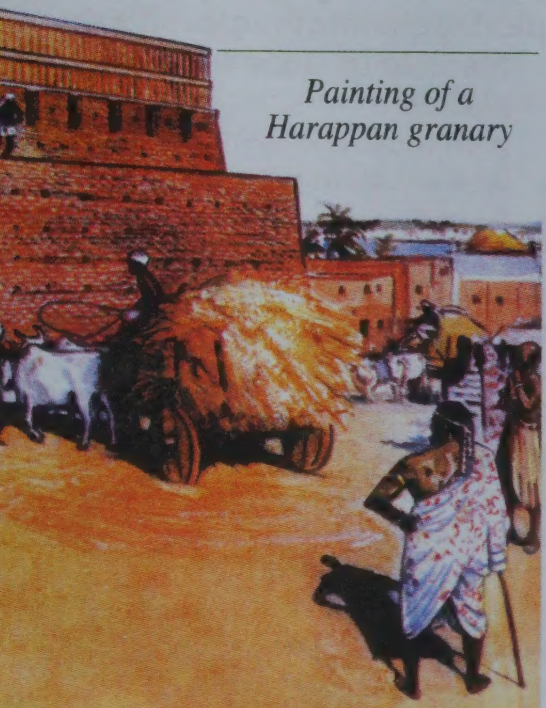
**Why is the Indus Valley civilization called a city civilization? Where, and when did it flourish?**

Have you heard about the Indus Valley civilization? It existed around five thousand years ago on the plains of the Indus River.

From about 2600 B.C. to 1700 BC, a vast number of settlements were built on the banks of the Indus River and surrounding areas. These settlements cover a remarkable region, almost 1.3 million square kilometres of land, which is today part of Afghanistan, Pakistan and north-western India.



*A clay cart loaded with merchandise, from Mohenjodaro*



*Painting of a Harappan granary*

The Indus Valley civilization was a great city civilization. In a city civilization, most of the people live in cities. They were craftsmen and traders, soldiers and administrators. Of course, there were also people living in villages who cultivated the land and raised cattle. The people in the cities got their grain and food from these villages.

We must remember though,

## Why are mounds sometimes the sites of ancient cities?

Did you know that large mounds sometimes have ancient cities hidden underneath them? In fact, the Indus valley civilization was discovered when an archeologist, R.D. Bannerjee, visited Mohenjodaro and saw a large mound. He thought there might be something underneath, and started digging. As the mud was gradually removed, an entire city was revealed! How did this city get covered with mud?

When an ancient city began to decline, people left it and moved elsewhere. After hundreds of years, the abandoned buildings crumbled and broke down. The wind blew mud and sand over them, and when the rain fell, the mud stuck to the buildings.

In this way, the whole city was covered in mud, and as more and more mud and sand were deposited by the wind, a mound was formed. Harappa and the other cities of the Indus Valley civilization were discovered when such mounds were excavated or dug up.

that the city civilization of the Indus valley developed from the village life of an earlier period. When the villages became too big, they needed a strong administration. They also began to produce excess grain, so that the people could devote themselves to other activities besides farming. This led to the growth of cities and city civilizations like that of the Indus Valley.

**Why do we say that the cities of the Indus Valley were the largest of ancient cities?**

**D**id you know that some of the cities of the Indus Valley had between 35000 and 40000 people living in them? The most important cities were Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Chanhudaro, Kalibangan, Banawali, Lothal, Dholavira, Sutkagendor and Surkotada.

The cities of the Indus Valley civilizations were well planned and solidly built of brick and stone. They had drainage systems, wells and water storage systems, as well as systems for weights and trade. The people made jewellery and toys for their children, and even developed a system of writing, which we unfortunately have not been able to decipher till now.

**Why did agriculture also flourish in the Harappan civilization? What crops were grown?**

**O**ne of the most fascinating, yet mysterious cultures of the ancient world is the Harappan civilization. This culture existed along the Indus river in present day Pakistan. It was named after the city of Harappa, which was the first city of the Indus Valley civilization to be discovered.

Farming was an important part of the Harappan way of life. There was plenty of water for good farming. By 4000 BC, people farmed along the banks of the Indus River and by 3000 BC, irrigation began. People also farmed along tributaries which are small rivers and streams that flow into a larger river. Earth links were built to control the river's annual flooding. The farmers ploughed their fields, probably using wooden

*A stone seal of the Indus Valley. Characters from their language are engraved at the top.*

ploughs. Using a plough made it much easier to grow more crops.

The crops that were grown included wheat, barley, peas, melons, rice and sesame. This civilization was the first to cultivate cotton for the production of cloth. Several animals were also domesticated, including the elephant, which was used for its ivory.

## What was the Harappan style of writing?

**The Harappans knew how to write, and over 2,000 stone seals have been found in the Indus Valley. These seals were small tablets which left an impression when pressed into a soft substance like clay. They were quadrangular in shape. These seals are some form writing, but unfortunately they have not been deciphered yet.**

**The Harappan writing consists of short strings of symbols. Some say that each symbol represents a picture or idea, others say it represents a sound. The fact, however, is that no one has actually been able to understand or read the writing of the Harappans.**

**Why do we say Harappan cities were well planned?**

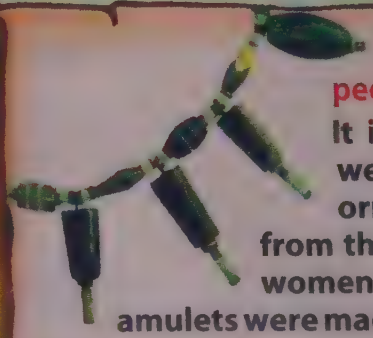
The cities of Harappa were well planned, and even had covered drains. Large areas were built with bricks of the same size and weight. They used kilns to make bricks and used burnt bricks in domestic and public buildings.

A Harappan city was divided into two parts. At the centre was the massive citadel. It had temples and granaries, an assembly hall and baths. Around it was what is known as the lower town. The streets were straight and broad. They were paved and laid at right angles to each other.

The houses had protection against noise, odours, and thieves. Houses faced streets, and were at least two stories high. They had brick staircases leading to the upper levels and the roof.

Life was centred around an enclosed courtyard, and there was a balcony over the courtyard. Each house had its own well and one even had a large bathtub!

*A Harappan warehouse*



**What ornaments did the Indus valley people use?**

**It is believed that Indus valley people were fond of dressing up and wearing ornaments. Archaeological discoveries from this period suggest that both men and women wore jewellery. Necklaces, beads and amulets were made from gold, silver and semi-precious stones including carnelian, turquoise and lapis lazuli.**

**Why is the Indus Valley civilization said to be the largest of all civilizations?**

The Indus Valley Civilization covered an area the size of Western Europe..... over 1.3 million square kilometres of land! It was spread out over what is today Pakistan, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Western Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.

It has been discovered that the Indus Valley civilization stretched from Jammu and Kashmir in the North, to Narmada in the South, and from the Makran coast of Baluchisthan in the west to the River Yamuna in the east.

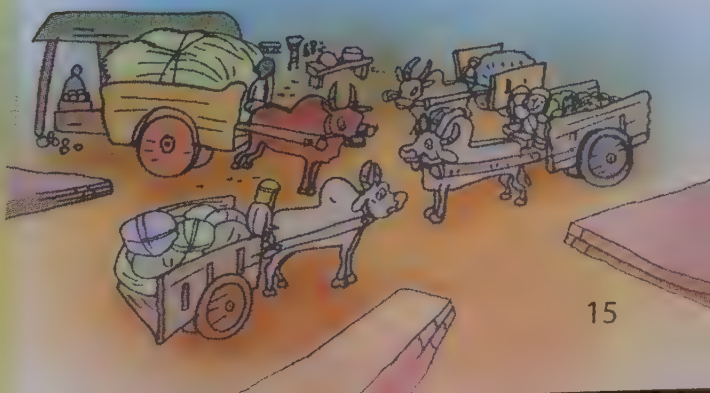
Over 1000 sites have been discovered, belonging to the Indus Valley civilization.

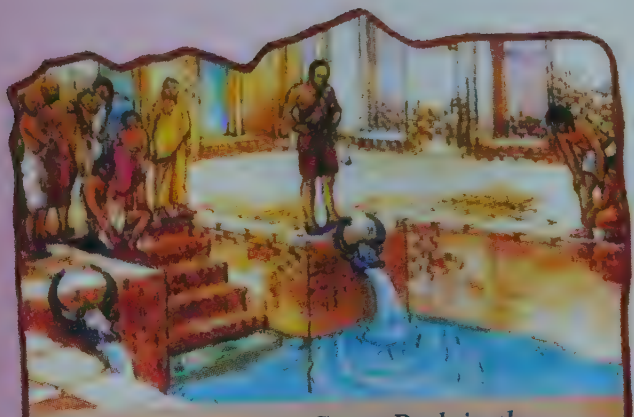
Is it any wonder that it was considered to be the largest of the four ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and China?

**Why were the Harappans great traders?**

The Harappans were great traders and had a complex system of trade networks that made them very rich. They traded in shell, dried fish, fish grain, and pearls from the coast, as well as copper, tin, turquoise, ivory, precious and semiprecious stone from the hill country. Of course, grains, animals, and wood were produced and traded from the rural areas.

The Harappans had networks that extended into Central Asia, Mesopotamia and the Arabian Peninsula. Through trade, the Harappan Civilization expanded its culture, and came into regular contacts with far away lands.





*A view of the Great Bath in the citadel of Mohenjodaro*

**Why did the citadel play an important role in the cities of the Indus Valley civilization? What was it?**

**The citadel was the main part of the city, built on a raised platform. It was built of bricks, and surrounded by a huge brick wall.**

**The citadel consisted of public buildings, a bath, granaries and quarters for providing shelter to the persons who taught religion. The remaining parts of the city were spread around the citadel. People went to the citadel for protection when the city was under attack.**

**Why did the Harappan civilization decline?**

The Harappan civilization finally declined between 2000 and 1800 BC. We cannot really pinpoint one single reason. Climate changes may have played a role, since the earth was becoming warmer during this time. The land became drier, and water ran short for cultivation.

It is also thought that earthquakes, or fires may have destroyed many cities. The city of Mohenjodaro shows evidence of having been destroyed by fire.

Other scholars feel that the population was wiped out by an epidemic or disease. It is also likely that the area became too large to be effectively controlled, encouraging attacks by outsiders. In any case, the nomadic Aryans invaded India around 1500 BC, destroying the Indus valley civilization, bringing to an end the most brilliant civilization of the ancient world.

**Why is the Chalcolithic period also called the Copper Age?**

The Chalcolithic Age refers to the pe

riod after the New Stone Age. During this time, copper became an important material, along with stone.

Chalcolithic man relied less on hunting than the Neolithic man. He focussed more on sheep and goat breeding, and the cultivation of wheat, barley, dates, olives and lentils.

Houses, during this period were built of sun-dried mud bricks with roofs made of wood, reeds and mud. Some houses were based on stone foundations, and many were planned around large courtyards. The walls of the houses were also used for artistic or ceremonial purposes.

In many parts of the country, Chalcolithic cultures existed between 2000 and 1000 BC. Chalcolithic sites have been discovered in Rajasthan, south Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, Central and South India.

## AMAZING BUT TRUE FACTS

### Why are fossils of fish and other marine animals found on the Himalayas?

Do you know that the area covered by the Himalayas today once lay under a sea? Yes, this amazing fact is true!

Millions of years ago, all the continents were joined together to form a giant continent called Pangaea. Gradually, Pangaea split up into two continents, Laurasia and Gondwanaland. These two continents were separated by a sea called the Tethys Sea. India, which was on Gondwanaland, later broke away and became an island. The Indian and the Eurasian plates collided with each other 20 to 30 million years ago, and as a result of this collision, the Himalayas started rising up. Since this area was once covered by the Tethys Sea, fossils of fish and other marine animals have been found on the Himalayas.

# THE ARYANS AND THE VEDIC PERIOD

## Who were the Aryans?

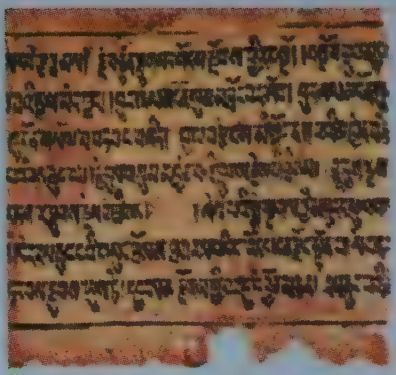
The Aryans were a tribal and nomadic people who lived far away in Euro-Asia. They were unquestionably a tough people, and they were fierce and war-like.

The Aryan culture was oriented around warfare, and they were very good at it. They were superior on horseback and rushed into battle in chariots. The Aryans were ruled over by a war chief, or Rajan.

Somewhere in the early centuries of the second millennium BC the Aryans began to migrate southwards in waves of steady conquest across the face of Persia and the lands of India. There, they would take on the name 'superior' or 'noble' to distinguish themselves from the people they conquered. Their name is derived from the Indo-European root word, 'ar,' meaning 'noble.'

The Aryans first settled along the Indus River, in the same place where the Harappa people had lived. They settled down and mixed with the local Indian people. They lived there from about 1500 to 800 BC. It seems to be at this time that the caste system began in India. It was the Aryans who developed Hinduism, and also the classical language of Sanskrit.

About 800 BC, the Aryans learned how to use iron for weapons and tools. Once the Aryans learned how to use iron, they used their new weapons to conquer more of India, and moved to the south and east into the Ganges river valley.



*Sanskrit script on an ancient pamphlet*

The Aryans are also called Vedic people since they composed some important books that desribe the life and religion of those days, known as Vedas.

**Why is the Rig Veda considered the oldest literary document of India?**

The Rig Veda is an ancient Indian collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns dedicated to the gods. These poems were first recited and sung around 1000 BC, and then written down in Sanskrit, the language of the Aryans.

The Rig Veda tells the story of Prajapati, the first God who created the world. His mouth, arms, thighs and feet turned into different groups of people. These groups became the different castes. The Rig Veda mentions many different gods, and it is the first written evidence of Hinduism. It refers to some rituals as marriage and funeral rites, which differ little from those practiced today. The Rig Veda is also considered to be the source of much Indian thought.

It is believed that the Rig Veda was composed roughly between 1700–1100 BC. This puts it among the world's oldest religious texts in continued use.

**Why do we say that the Aryans introduced the caste system in India?**

The Aryan society was divided into four Varnas or castes, which were decided by the occupation one followed. The four Varnas were the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Shudras. The word 'varna' means colour, and

*Brahmin boys-*
*A 20th century painting*

in those days, the four castes were supposed to wear different colours. The brahmins wore white, the kshatriyas wore yellow, the vaishyas wore red, and the shudras wore black.

The brahmins were teachers, priests and intellectuals. The kshatriyas were warriors and administrators. The vaishyas were farmers, merchants and business people, and the shudras were artisans and workers.

In the early days, a person was not born into a caste. However, with the passing of time, the caste system became more rigid. A person's caste was decided by birth, and brahmins and kshatriyas began to consider themselves superior to the other two castes. The system of untouchability was one of the evils that resulted as a result of the caste system.

**Why are the Vedas considered to be sacred? What are the four Vedas?**

The word 'Veda' means knowledge in Sanskrit.The Vedas are the oldest sacred texts of Hinduism. The four main Vedas are the Rig Veda, The Sama Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Atharva Veda.

The Rig Veda is a collection of inspired songs or hymns, and is the main source of information on the civilization of that time. The Rig Veda is considered to be the most precious gift that the Aryans have passed on to us.

The Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda were compiled after the age of the Rig Veda, and are ascribed to the Vedic period.

The Sama Veda is purely a collection of melodies. The hymns

in the Sama Veda, used as musical notes, were almost completely drawn from the Rig Veda. Musical notes indicated how the verses should be chanted. In effect, it is a shortened and musical version of the Rig Veda.

The Yajur Veda practically served as a guidebook for the priests. It contains hymns and rituals to be performed while chanting the verses.

The Atharva Veda contains magic spells and chants to cure diseases, and ward off danger. If you have fever, or have been bitten by a snake, the Atharava Veda has a chant to cure it!

According to Hinduism, the Vedas are of divine origin, and it is believed that all human knowledge is available in the Vedas in symbolic form.

## Why are the Upanishads different from the Vedas?

The Upanishads are part of the Hindu scriptures which primarily discuss meditation and philosophy, and are seen as religious instructions by most schools of Hinduism.

Studying the Upanishads is like sitting down near a spiritual teacher in order to receive instruction. They are not concerned with gods, worship or sacrifice. Instead, they tried to explain the world and the cycle of life and death. They were written around 600 BC, and are sometimes called 'Vedanta', which means 'the end of the Vedas.'

## Why are the Ramayana and Mahabharatha considered India's greatest epics?

Who has not heard of the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha? These two great epics are studied in every nook and corner of the country. They were written in Sanskrit, and were then translated into various languages. The Ramayana was written by the Sage Valmiki. The Mahabharatha was written by Veda Vyasa.

The Mahabharata is much more than an epic-it's a magnificent piece of literature, which has, for thousand of years, been a part of India's culture. A sweeping tale of the feud between two families, it is the mother of all epics. It spans hundreds of years and deals with a wide range of topics. In fact, its introduction says "What is found here may be found elsewhere. What is not found here will not be found elsewhere."

The Ramayana was originally written in the Sanskrit language. Later on, it was translated into other languages in different versions. The main story of the Ramayana is about Lord Rama. Rama, who was born in a royal family and was supposed to be the king, but because of his step mother, he was exiled from his

## Why is Mahabharatha called the world's longest poem?

**The Mahabharatha is an epic Hindu scripture revolving around the family feud between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. This feud ends in the great battle, the Mahabharata war. With over 1,00,000 verses, The Mahabharatha is the world's longest poem. Its length is about seven times that of the Iliad and the Odyssey combined!**

kingdom for fourteen years. During this period, his wife Sita was kidnapped by a demon called Ravana, who was the king of Lanka. Rama, with the help of his brother, Lakshman, and an army of monkeys under the leadership of Hanuman, rescued Sita.

But the Ramayana isn't only about Lord Rama and his attempt to rescue his wife Sita. The Ramayana is also about devotion, loyalty, family roles and respect to elders.

These great epics are the backbone of our great Indian tradition and culture. They have very great influence on Indian heritage. They conveyed deep rooted messages, which have had great impact on Indian society. The essence of these epics is Dharma, righteousness, good conduct, fearlessness, duty, and dedication.

*Ancient coins commemorating Ashvamedha.*

### Why did kings perform a horse sacrifice in Vedic times?

In the later Vedic period, that is, between 1000 and 600 BC, kings performed the Ashvamedha Yagna, or horse sacrifice. It was one of the most important royal rituals of the Vedic religion.

The Ashvamedha could only be conducted by a king. Its purpose was to acquire power and glory, to establish sovereignty over neighbouring provinces, and to ensure general prosperity for the kingdom. A pure white horse was marked with a victory card and allowed to roam about freely. If anyone stopped the horse, the king had to go and defeat him in battle and bring back the horse. The horse was then sacrificed along with many other animals.

# MAHAJANAPADAS AND THE KINGDOM OF MAGADHA

**Why, and how did Mahajanapadas come into existence? What were they?**

*Pataliptra, the capital of Magadha*

There were many new states in North India, around the 6 th century BC. These were called the 'Mahajanapadas' or great states. They came into being when people started settling in one place in groups. They usually settled in a fertile area, and wanted to defend their land, crops and houses from other people. So, these states had their own armies, and were ruled by kings or ruling councils.

The Mahajanapadas were 16 in number. Anga, Kashi, Kosala, Chedi, Vatsa, Matsya, Surasena,

**Why are the Megalithic graves of South India similar to the Egyptian pyramids?**

Prehistoric 'Megalithic' or large stone graves are found in huge numbers in South India, especially in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

As you know, the pyramids are massive monuments built over a tomb that contained all objects which would be useful for a dead person in his afterlife. Similarly, megaliths were large stone constructions built over a tomb. Rectangular chambers

Asmaka, Avanti, Gandhar and Magadha were ruled by kings or monarchs. The kings in these states had the supreme authority.

The Mahajanapadas of Vajji, Malla, Kuru, Panchal and Kamboj were republican states and so were other smaller states like Lichhavi, Shakya, Koliya, Bhagga, and Moriya. These republican states had a 'Gana-parishad' or an assembly of senior and responsible citizens. It had the supreme authority in the state. All the administrative decisions were taken by it.

Of all these, Kosala, Vatsa, Avanti and Magadha were the most important ones.

*The Mahajanapadas*

made of large stone slabs are very common. They also contained jewellery, axes, arrowheads and household articles for the after life. In this respect, they are similar to the pyramids of Egypt.

There were also urn burials, in which the bones of the dead person were put in a pot or urn, and then buried in a pit.

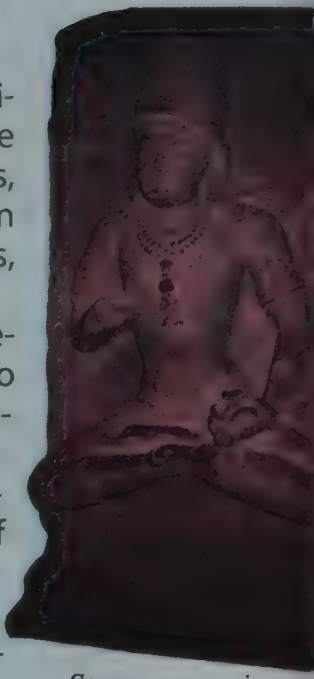
*Megalithic tombs of Deccan*

## Who was Bimbisara?

Bimbisara was the king of Magadha. His capital was at Rajgir. Bimbisara became the king at the age of fifteen, and reigned for fifty-two years, until the kingdom was taken over by his son Ajatashatru. It is said that he had 500 wives, though we know about only four of them!

Bimbisara's expansion of his kingdom, especially his annexation of the kingdom of Anga to the east, is considered to have laid the foundation for the later expansion of the Mauryan Empire. He is also known for his cultural achievements, and was a great friend and protector of the Buddha. The king's support greatly helped the growth of Buddhism in India.

Tradition tells us that Bimbisara was imprisoned by his son Ajatashatru who is said to have starved him to death.



*Stone engraving of king Bimbisara*

## Why did an Indian King build a wooden elephant like the Trojan horse?

Have you heard the story of how the Greeks won a battle against the kingdom of Troy by building a huge wooden horse? The horse was so big that Greek soldiers could hide inside it. The Greeks left the horse outside the gates of Troy, and pretended to leave. When the Trojans saw the horse, they took it inside their city, for it was so magnificent. At night, while the Trojans slept, the Greek soldiers came out of the horse and destroyed the Troy.

Did you know that a similar thing happened in India too? Pradyota, king of Avanti, one of the most prosperous states in North, wanted to capture the

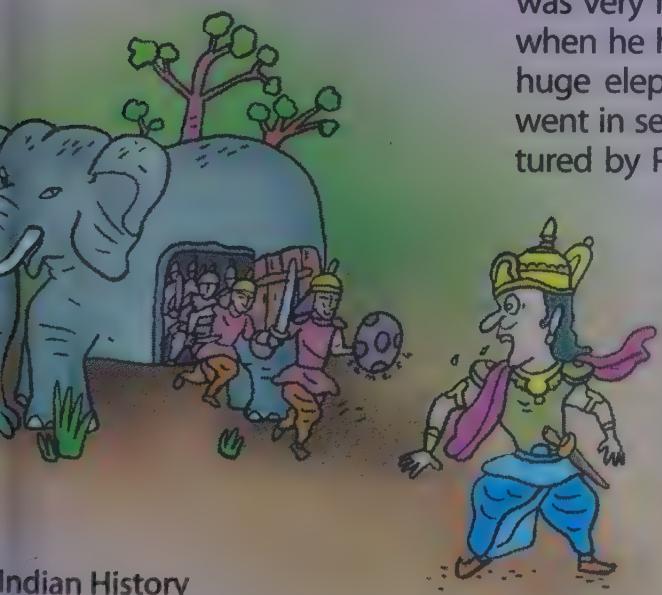
**Why do the Nandas have a special place in Indian history?**

**The Nandas have a special place in Indian history as the first empire builders of India. They inherited the large kingdom of Magadha, and wished to extend it to yet more distant frontiers. The first Nanda ruler was Mahapadma, and the last was Dhana Nanda.**

**At the time of Dhana Nanda, the Nandas had an army consisting of 80,000 cavalry, 2,00,000 infantry, 8,000 armed chariots, and 6,000 war elephants!**

**The Nandas were very wealthy, and they got their wealth through the taxes they collected. They also built canals and carried out irrigation projects. They were not popular rulers, but their army was famous. In fact, many historians hold the view that Alexander the great confined himself to the plains of Punjab for fear of the mighty Nandas!**

king of Vatsa, Udayana. So he built a huge wooden elephant, hid his soldiers inside it, and left the elephant in the forest. Udayana was very fond of elephants, and when he heard that there was a huge elephant in the forest, he went in search of it. He was captured by Pradyota's soldiers and brought to Avanti.



The story has a happy ending though. Pradyota's daughter fell in love with Udayana and helped him to escape. They married and she lived happily as his queen!

# JINA AND BUDDHA

*Statue of Mahavira*

## Why was Mahavira also called Jina and Tirthankara?

Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, was born in Kundagrama near Vaishali. He was born as Prince Vardhamana in Bihar in 599 BC. He was a very brave child, who once mounted a charging elephant!

At the age of thirty, Mahavira renounced his kingdom, and family. It is believed that Mahavira did not partake of even water, for two days. He pulled out his hair, and wore only a piece of cloth. Later, he gave half of that garment to a beggar. After a little over a year, he gave up clothes altogether.

Mahavira's teachings are full of universal compassion. He taught about the internal beauty and harmony of the soul.

Mahavira preached that right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct together will lead one towards liberation.

The religion Mahavira established is known as Jainism. Mahavira himself is also called 'Jina' which means conqueror, for he was a spiritual conqueror of mankind. He is also known as Tirthankara which means ford-maker, as he was the bridge to enlightenment.

## Why did Prince Siddhartha renounce the world to become Lord Buddha?

Buddha's original name was Prince Siddhartha. Siddhartha spent his boyhood at Kapilavastu and its vicinity. At the age of twenty nine, Siddhartha suddenly abandoned his home, his wife and child to devote himself entirely to spiritual pursuits and yogic practices. Do you know why?

One day, Siddhartha left the walled enclosure of the palace and roamed about in the town

*Golden statue of Budha gifted to India by the spiritual leader of Tibet, The Dalai Lama*

along with his servant to see how the people were getting on. The sight of a weak old man, a sick man, a corpse and a monk finally induced Siddhartha to renounce the world.

Siddhartha realized that worldly life with all its luxuries was worthless, and that the pleasure we got from worldly things was fleeting. At the same time, he noticed that the monk looked serene and peaceful, and decided that he too, would find a way to get relief from the endless cycle of birth, suffering and death.

Siddhartha left his palace and family and wandered for many years in search of enlightenment. Finally, as he sat under a peepul tree, he freed himself of all attachments, and discovered the truth, and the secret of happiness. He became Buddha or 'the Enlightened One'.

According to Buddha, people can get free of the cycle of birth, suffering and death by leading a balanced life. He stressed the importance of being good, of learning not to care about worldly things, and of meditation.

Buddha had many followers in his lifetime, and after his death, Buddhism, the religion he founded, spread throughout India and other parts of Asia.

*Kailashnath temple at Ellora. A carving of Mahavira can also be seen.*

*A section from Amaravati stupa depicting Prince Siddhartha's spiritual journey*

## Why was the first Great Buddhist Council held?

The teachings of Buddha had not been written down during his lifetime. So, six months after he died or attained Nirvana, the first Great Buddhist Council was held at Rajgir, under the patronage of King Ajatashatru. Its objective was to preserve Buddha's sayings and to lay down monastic discipline or rules.

In the following centuries, four Buddhist Councils were held to discuss Buddha's teachings. It was during the fourth council that the division of Buddhism into two sects was finally accepted.

## Why are the Swetambara Jains different from the Digambara Jains?

There are two main sects of Jainism, the Swetambaras and the Digambaras. While both follow the teachings of Mahavira, they differ in their practices.

The word 'Swetambara' means 'white clad.' They wear white clothes. The Digambara Jains wear no clothes at all. Their name means 'clad only in space' and they portray Mahavira as being completely naked too.

Swetambaras do not believe that women are unable to obtain moksha or liberation. Some monks cover their mouth with a white cloth because they do not want to even accidently inhale a small insect or organism.

## Which is the oldest university in the Indian sub continent?

**The oldest University in the Indian sub continent was Takshasila or Taxila. It was the capital of the Budhhist kingdom of Gangadhara and was located west of Rawalpindi in what is now Pakistan.**

**The University of Taxila was a great centre of learning in the ancient world. Scholars came from far and wide to study here. It was famous for its schools of Brahminica**

## Why are Mahayana and Hinayana said to be different forms of Buddhism?

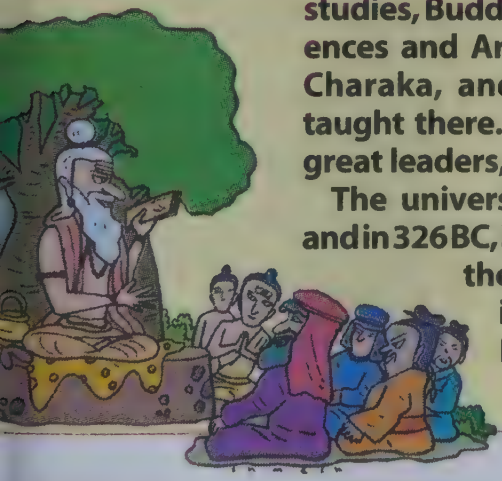
Buddhism does not believe in the existence of gods, in elaborate rituals, in the caste system, or in the worship of images. It teaches that everyone is equal, that nothing lasts forever, and that nothing happens by chance. Its aim is to attain 'Nirvana' which is the liberation of the soul from the cycle of life, death and rebirth.

Buddhism is divided into two major sects-Hinayanas and Mahayanas. The Hinayana sect regarded Buddha as a great teacher, not a God. They believed that the only way to attain nirvana was by leading a monastic life and abandoning all worldly pleasures.

*Young Buddhist monks of Tibet*

The Mahayana sect worshipped Buddha as God. They believed that enlightenment would come to all those who followed the path of righteousness, irrespective of their status in society. The Mahayana Buddhists also believed that love and compassion are as important as knowledge.

Mahayana Buddhism became very popular in India, China, Tibet, Japan and Central Asia. Hinayana Buddhism spread more in Burma, Sri Lanka and the countries of South East Asia.



**studies, Buddhist philosophy, Medicine, Sciences and Arts. Great scholars like Panini, Charaka, and Kautilya believed to have taught there. Many of its students became great leaders, thinkers and scientists.**

**The university came under Persian rule, and in 326 BC, it was surrendered to Alexander the great. King Ashoka made it an important Buddhist centre in BC 261. It was destroyed by the Huns in the 5th century AD.**

*A giant statue in Sri Lanka depicting the Parinirvana of Buddha*

## Why is Vajrayana Buddhism different from traditional Buddhism?

Vajrayana Buddhism emerged in Tibet about the 7th century AD. Its prominent symbol is the 'Vajra' which means a diamond or thunder bolt. It was the latest phase in the development and evolution of Buddhism.

Vajrayana's main claim is that it enables a person to reach Nirvana or freedom from suffering in a single lifetime-rather than passing through countless lives before achieving salvation. Vajrayana promises the 'fast path' to Buddhahood-a path that, in some Vajrayana traditions, brings magical powers.

Vajrayana Buddhism lays great emphasis on mantras or incantations, mudras or hand gestures and mandals or diagrams of deities and other cosmic forces. It also involves for the first time, worship of female deities, of which the most important of all is Tara.

Vajrayana Buddhism developed out of Mahayana teachings in northwest India. It is also known as Tantric Buddhism, due to its reliance on sacred texts called tantras.

## Why did the Buddhists carve cave temples?

The idea of creating temples by hollowing out rock faces began with the Buddhists. The monks needed places where they could pray and hold discussions in peace, and the caves were ideal for this purpose. Gradually, these caves became temples or monasteries were the monks lived.

The earliest Buddhist cave temple was found in Maharashtra at Bhaja near Pune. It is more than 2000 years old. Instead of images, the presence of Buddha was indicated only by a stupa or mound in the early cave temples.

### Ajivikas and Keshakambalin

**These are two spiritual streams followed by Jainism and Buddhism. Followers of Goshala Maskariputra were called Ajivikas. Goshala said everything was pre-determined in life and one should do whatever he feels like.**

**Ajita Keshakambalin was a nun who believed that only the material world was real and there was no meaning in Karma. The word Keshakambalin means a hair jacket.**

In the later cave temples though, like the ones at Ajanta, many images of Buddha can be seen. The distinguishing feature of all the temples is a huge arched window that is found over the main entrance.

The Ellora caves near Aurangabad and the Elephanta caves near Mumbai are other famous cave temples of this era.

*Buddhist cave temple of Ajanta*

### Why were there no images of Buddha at first?

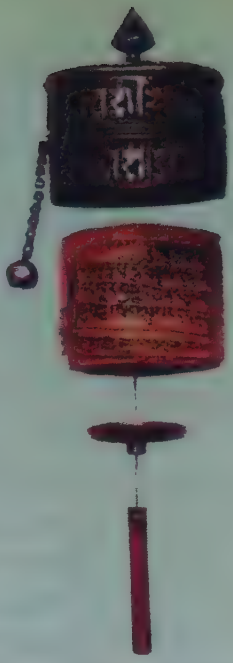
Lord Buddha did not want his followers to worship his image, and so, for a long time, no figures of Buddha were drawn or carved. The earliest representation of Buddha was made through the stupas or mounds erected on the relics of Buddha. These mounds had external decorations on them, tracing the lives and events of Buddha. Symbols like foot, sacred tree, holy seat or altar were also widely used to represent Buddha.

The first Buddha statues were carved in stone in Mathura, near Delhi. The noteworthy characteristics of the Buddha statues were that the figures were always facing the front, and were standing free or seated in the regular cross legged religious posture.

**Why are the Tripitikas sacred to the Buddhists?**

All religions have their sacred scriptures upon which their doctrines are founded. For example, Christianity has its Bible, Islam has the Koran, and Hinduism has its Vedas.

The sacred scriptures of Buddhism are the Tripitikas. They are written in the Pali script, and are made up of three parts, which are referred to as 'baskets'. In fact, the very word 'Tritipika' means 'three baskets.'



*The prayer wheel of Buddhists*

One part is called the Abhidhamma Pitika or the Basket of Dharma. It explains the principles of Buddhism. Another part is called Vinaya Pitika or the Basket of Discipline. It deals with the rules to be observed by the monks. The largest and most important part is the Sutta Pitika, or the Basket of Stories. It consists of the sermons and sayings of Lord Buddha.

The number of volumes in the Tripitaka, which were compiled at various times differs, and is without parallel in any other religion

**What are the Jatakas?**

**The Jatakas are the Buddhist tales about the former lives of the Buddha. Before he attained enlightenment, Buddha had been born as Bodhisattva. It is said that he was born again and again 547 times, sometimes in a human form, and sometimes as a bird or beast or fish. The Jataka deals with these lives of Buddha.**

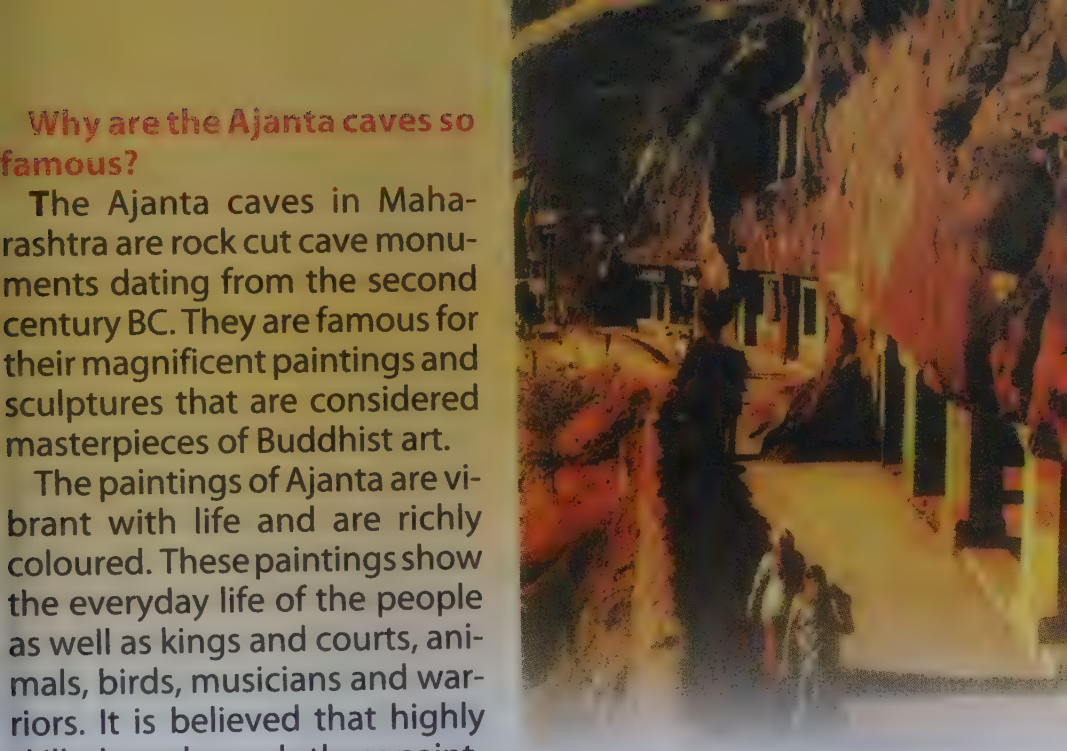
**These tales always begin with an incident in the life of the Buddha, usually a sermon he is giving, which he illustrates with a story from one of his previous lives. The Jatakas are primarily moral tales illustrating the wisdom and goodness of the Bodhisattva figure.**

## Why are the Ajanta caves so famous?

The Ajanta caves in Maharashtra are rock cut cave monuments dating from the second century BC. They are famous for their magnificent paintings and sculptures that are considered masterpieces of Buddhist art.

The paintings of Ajanta are vibrant with life and are richly coloured. These paintings show the everyday life of the people as well as kings and courts, animals, birds, musicians and warriors. It is believed that highly skilled monks made these paintings to spread the teachings of Buddha, and to guide people in a righteous way.

Do you know how these caves were discovered? Way back in1819, a party of British army officers was on a tiger hunt in the forest of western Deccan. They suddenly spotted their prey, on the far side of a loop in the Waghora River. The hunting party saw the tiger, silhouetted against the carved façade of a cave. On investigating, the officers discovered a series of carved caves, each more dramatic than the other.



*The Caves of Ajanta*

There are 29 caves in all. Five of them were temples and 24 were monasteries, thought to have been occupied by some 200 monks and artisans. The cave complex was continuously built until about AD 650. Today, the Ajanta caves have been recognized by UNESCO as one of the world's greatest historical monuments.

# INVASION OF ALEXANDER

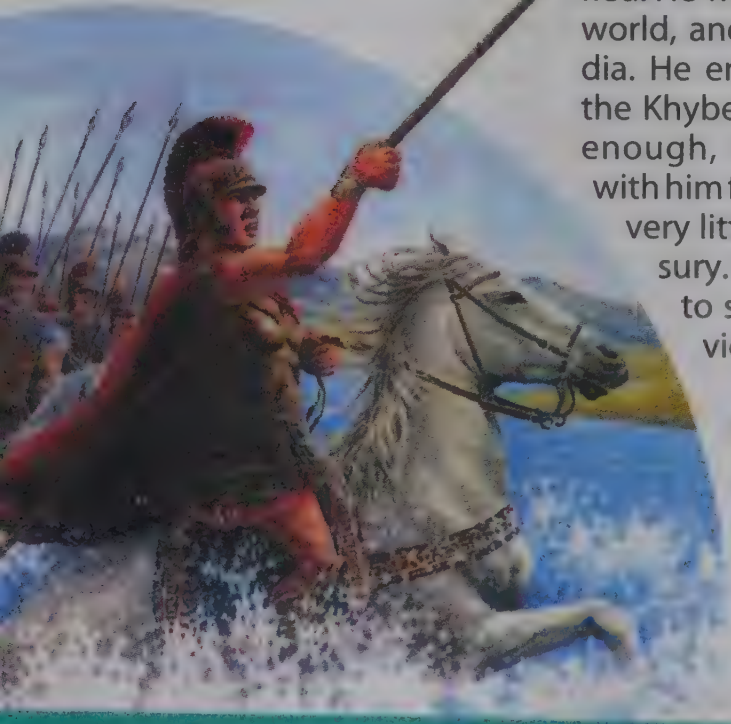
## Why did Alexander the Great invade India?

Do you know who Alexander the Great was? He was the king of Macedonia in ancient Greece. His father, King Philip was a brilliant military commander and politician. He had built up a strong army and dreamt of invading Persia.

Philip was assassinated on the eve of his invasion of Persia. His son, Alexander, took over the reins of both army and kingdom when he was just nineteen! He carried out his father's invasion plans at once.

Schooled in war and politics by his father, and in everything else by the legendary Greek philosopher Aristotle, Alexander was filled with knowledge of the world and ambition for conquering it. In 331 BC he defeated the Persian King Darius, and conquered Persia.

But Alexander was not satisfied. He wanted to conquer the world, and moved towards India. He entered India through the Khyber Pass. Astonishingly enough, Alexander brought with him few fighting ships and very little in the way of treasury. Yet his determination to succeed brought him victory after victory.



## Why did Alexander return King Porus's kingdom to him?

The greatest battle fought by Alexander in India was at Jhelum. The Indian infantry attacked with 20,000 men and

130 elephants. The trumpeting, ferocious elephants were defeated by Alexander... but at great cost.

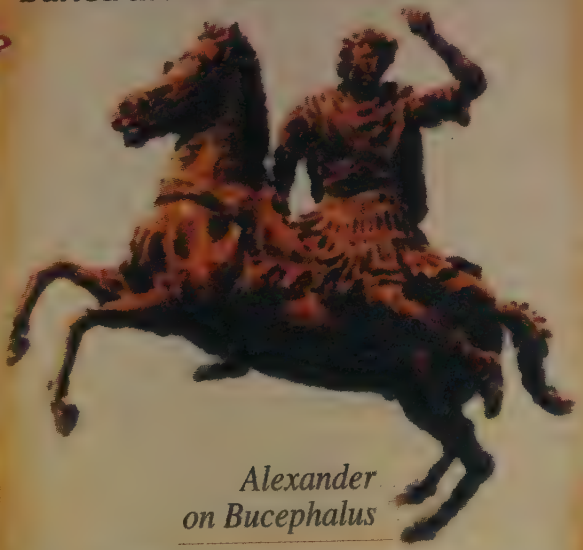
Porus, King of Jhelum, led the final elephant charge in person. He lost more than 12,000 troops and both of his sons were also killed in battle. Porus was finally captured and brought to meet Alexander.

Porus was a magnificent figure of a man, tall and handsome. His bearing had lost none of its pride and his air was of one brave man meeting another. He was a king, who was in the presence of another king with whom he had fought honorably for his kingdom.

Alexander asked Porus whether he had any request, and Porus replied that he only wished to be treated like a king. His answer so impressed Alexander, that he returned Porus' kingdom to him.

**Which are the cities built by Alexander in India?**

**As Alexander marched through India he fought battles, built altars, and founded cities. One city he called Boukephala in honor of his favorite horse Bucephalus, which died and was buried there. Other cities he called Al-**



*Alexander on Bucephalus*

**exandria in honor of his own name.**

**As they journeyed, Alexander and his soldiers saw many new and strange sights. At last, Alexander reached the city of Lahore, and marched on to the banks of the river Sutlej beyond. He was eager to reach the holy river Ganges and conquer the people there. But his men had grown weary of fighting under the burning sun and torrential rains of India, and they begged him to go no further. So, greatly against his will, Alexander turned back.**

### Why was Alexander's invasion a milestone in Indian history?

Alexander's invasion resulted in the establishment of Greek settlements in India. It taught the Indian kings the need to be more united among themselves in order to fight off invaders. The skill and discipline of the Greek army inspired the need for a better army. Many small kingdoms were destroyed, leading to the establishment of a new empire.

India thus came into contact with the European world, and land and sea routes to India became well known. The Greek influence on Indian art can be seen in the Gandhara sculptures, as well as in architecture and science.

In short, the Greek influence restructured the Indian states and society, and changed the fabric of the North Indian artistic and scientific world.

# MAURYAN EMPIRE

### Why was the Mauryan Empire called by this name? Who founded it?

Chandragupta was the founder of the Maurya dynasty, which ruled ancient India for about 140 years. He was not born a prince. He came from an ordinary family and it is believed that Chandragupta was raised by peacock trainers. Some say, he came from a land of peacocks and that is why he was called 'Maurya', a word that comes from 'mayura', which means peacocks.

Chandragupta was the pupil of a brilliant brahmin called Chanakya. Under his guidance, he started taking over the small villages on the outskirts of the kingdom ruled by King Dhanananda. Finally, in 321 BC, he conquered the capital, Pataliputra, and overthrew King Dhanananda.

Chandragupta's troops conquered many north Indian kingdoms and claimed lands that stretched as far as west as Afghanistan. In this way, Chandragupta united northern India under one ruler for the first time in history, and established the Mauryan Empire.

*Mauryan Empire*

## Who wrote 'Arthashastra?'

Chanakya, also known as Kautilya, became Chandragupta's prime minister, and legend describes him as being the author of a book titled Arthashastra. Arthashastra means science of property and material success. This success includes political and diplomatic strategy aimed at uniting India.

According to Kautilya, a ruler should use any means to attain

*Chanakya at Chandragupta's court*

his goal, and his actions required no moral sanction. The only problems discussed are of the most practical kind. Though kings were allowed a free rein, the citizens were subject to a rigid set of rules.

Much of our knowledge about state policy of the Mauryas comes from the Arthashastra, which is a treatise on statecraft, economic policy and military strategy.

*The Great Stupa at Sanchi*

## Why was Ashoka given this name? Who was he?

The great Indian emperor, Ashoka was the grandson of Changragupta Maurya. At his birth, his mother is believed to have said, "Now I am ashoka" which means 'Now I am without sorrow.' So the child was named 'Ashoka.'

In 268 BC, Ashoka was crowned king of Magadha, and he proved himself to be a very courageous and a good administrator. He ruled over an empire that covered two-thirds of the Indian continent! He was the most famous of the Mauryan kings, and was one of the greatest rulers of India.

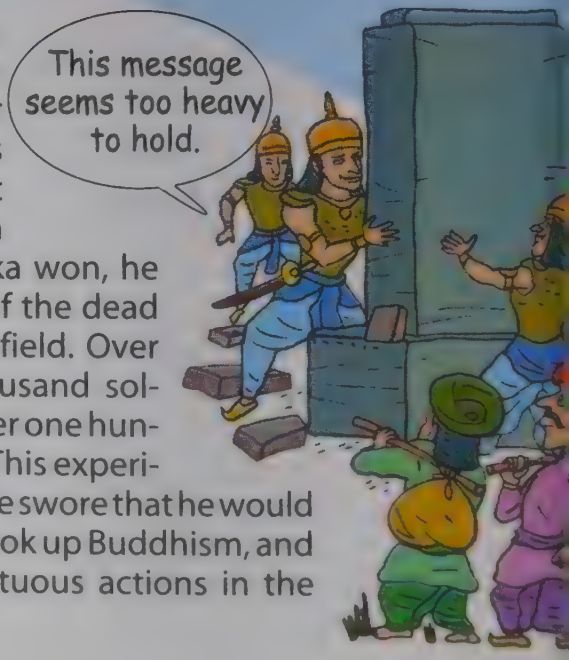
## Why did Ashoka choose stone pillars for his messages?

Ashoka spread the teachings of Buddha and his own messages by engraving them on stone pillars throughout his kingdom. Since he wanted his words to be everlasting, he chose a medium that would never rust or decay. The Ashoka pillars, as they are now called, were over forty feet high and extremely heavy. They are found from Afghanistan in the north to Karnataka in the south.

The messages on these pillars were written in Pali, a simple form of Sanskrit, which the common people spoke. Did you know that the national emblem of India has been taken from the Ashoka pillar at Sarnath, and that the Ashoka chakra on the Indian flag was Ashoka's symbol for the wheel of Dharma?

## Why did the battle of Kalinga mark a turning point in Ashoka's life?

Eight years after being crowned the king, Ashoka decided to annex Kalinga, or present day Orissa into his kingdom. This was the first and last battle that Ashoka ever fought. Though Ashoka won, he was horrified by the sight of the dead and wounded at the battlefield. Over one hundred and fifty thousand soldiers were captured, and over one hundred thousand were killed. This experience changed Ashoka, and he swore that he would never wage war again. He took up Buddhism, and vowed to practice only virtuous actions in the future.



**Who was the most famous Indo-Greek King?**

The most important development after the fall of the Mauryas was the arrival of foreign tribal groups into India. During 200 BC, the Indo-Greeks from Afghanistan began to attack Indian territories. Ashoka's weak successors could not withstand this invasion. The Indo-Greeks were, therefore, able to conquer large areas in India and establish kingdoms there.

The most famous Indo-Greek was King Menander, also called Milinda. His capital was at Sakala, which is now Sialkot, in Pakistan. He was very interested in Buddhism, and his discussions with a great Buddhist scholar of the time have been put together in a book called 'Milinda Panho' or 'The questions of Milinda.'

Milinda's reign was long and successful. His coins testify the prosperity and extension of Milinda's empire.

**Why are the writings of Megasthenes important?**

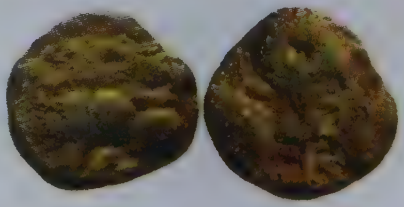
**Megasthenes was a Greek historian from the kingdom of Ionia. The king Seleucus-I sent him as an ambassador to the court of king Chandragupta Maurya. His report about the culture, history and religion of India was the basis of western knowledge about India.**

**Megasthenes described the people of Pataliputra as skilled in the arts, and as having plenty of nourishing food. There were not many thieves, and people often left their houses and property unguarded. He described the people of Pataliputra as uncomplicated in their manners, and as seldom going to court against one another.**

# SATAVAHANAS AND KUSHANAS

## Why were the Satavahanas known as great rulers?

The fall of the Mauryan Empire gave birth to a new dynasty in the south called Satavahanas. It was Simukha who founded this dynasty. It extended from the mouth of the Krishna River to the whole of the Deccan plateau.



*Satavahana coins*

The Deccan, during their reign, was a hub of inland and maritime trade. The region between the rivers of Krishna and Godavari was full of ports, and was throbbing with activity. There was plenty of currency to facilitate trade, and this was an era of great industrial and maritime activity.

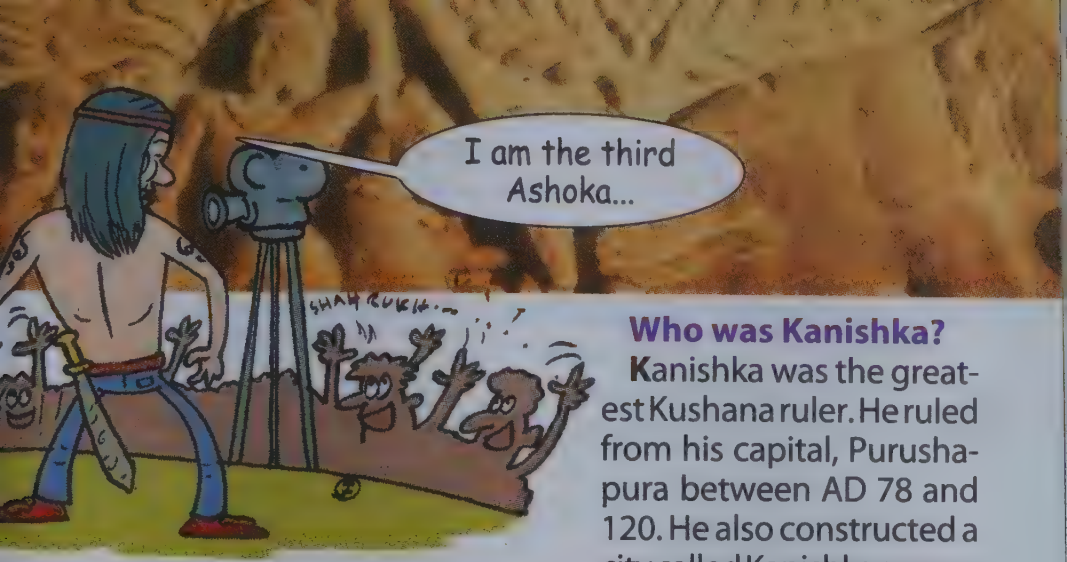
Buddhism flourished throughout the period, and the Satavahana kings constructed several Buddhist Stupas, Chaityas and Viharas. The Stupa at Amaravati is known for its architecture par excellence.

The Satavahana kings ruled for nearly four hundred years. By the end of the 2nd century AD, their rule came to an end.

## Who were the Kushanas?

The Kushanas ruled over north India from AD 50 to 300. They belonged to the Yueh-chi tribe of China, which moved towards the west. Kujula Kadphises, a Yuch-Chi chief, established himself in Kabul and Kashmir founded Kushana dynasty.

It was one of the remarkable dynasties of ancient India, both culturally and territorially. The




Kushanas had their capital at Purushapura (Peshawar) and expanded their empire on both sides of Hind Kush, Turkistan in the north and modern Afghanistan.

The Kushanas opened the Silk Road, a major trade path for caravans carrying silk and other prominent goods from China to India and Middle East. They enriched the cultural ethos of India, by linking Central Asian, Chinese, Indian and Persian cultures.

### Who was Kanishka?

Kanishka was the greatest Kushana ruler. He ruled from his capital, Purushapura between AD 78 and 120. He also constructed a city called Kanishkapuram.

Kanishka conquered Kashmir. He also defeated the Chinese and the Saka rulers of Malwa and Gujarat.

Kanishka was a great patron of medicine. A new school of art called Gandhara art developed during his time. This was inspired by Buddhism, though it has some Greek influence too. Kanishka is thought to have started the Shaka era, which was later used as the official calendar of India.

### Why was Kanishka called the second Ashoka?

**Kanishka worshipped many Gods before he embraced Buddhism. Ashvaghosha, the Buddhist scholar, probably influenced Kanishka to become a Buddhist. Like Ashoka, Kanishka also worked for the spread of Buddhism. He took steps to repair many old monasteries. New ones were also built. During his time Buddhism spread to China, Japan, Central Asia and Tibet. Because of this, he is considered as the Second Ashoka.**

## Which is the oldest text book on Ayurveda?

Ayurveda is an ancient system of medicine, and the Charaka Samhita is one of the oldest and most important ancient texts in Ayurveda.

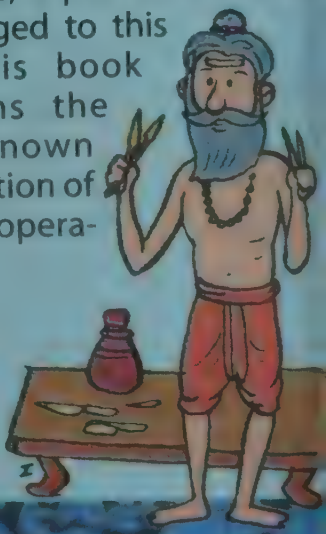
It is written in Sanskrit, in the form of poetry, as poems are easier to remember than prose. The Charaka Samhita has eight sections and 150 chapters. It describes over 600 drugs that can be obtained from animals, plants and minerals. It also had a code of conduct for doctors. It says, "a doctor must not betray his patients even at the cost of his own life."

Some people believe the Charaka Samhita was written by a group of scholars. Others say that it was written by a famous physician called Charaka who lived during the reign of Kanishka, and was one of the founders of Ayurveda.

## Why is Sushruta called the Father of modern surgery?

Sushruta who lived in the 6th century BC in ancient India, was the first surgeon in the world. He lived on the banks of the Ganga in what is Varanasi today.

Sushruta is the author of the book Sushruta Samhita, in which he describes over 120 surgical instruments, 300 surgical procedures and 8 types of surgeries. He is the pioneer in plastic surgery and cosmetic surgery, and the technique that he perfected for repairing the nose, is practiced almost unchanged to this day. His book contains the first known description of several operations.



**Who wrote Natyashastra, the classical book on Indian dance?**

Did you know that all forms of Indian classical dance are based on a book called the Natyashastra? It was written by a great sage called Bharatha around fourth century BC. It is the source of not only all forms of Indian classical dance, but also music and drama. In fact, it is regarded as the fifth Veda.

According to the Natyashastra, all dance forms revolve around the nine rasas or emotions. They are happiness, sorrow, anger, compassion, disgust, wonder, fear, courage and serenity. Hand movements or mudras, are used to make the emotions expressed clearer to the audience.

The Natyashastra is the world's first book on stagecraft. Bharata's ideas are the key to an understanding of Indian arts, music and sculpture.

Sushrutha was also the first surgeon to advocate the practice of operations on inanimate objects such as watermelons and reeds, thus laying the foundation for the modern practice of surgical workshops. He suggested that patients should be kept under sedation with wine, so that they are relaxed during an operation. His emphasis on personal cleanliness and sterilisation of instruments are followed by surgeons till today. His numerous contributions to the science and art of surgery have given him the title 'Father of Surgery.'

# EARLY KINGDOMS OF SOUTH INDIA (400 BC-AD 300)

## Why was the time between 400 BC and AD 300 an era of prosperity in South India?

The three main kingdoms in South India between 400 BC and AD 300 were the Pandyans, the Cheras and the Cholas.

The Pandyan kingdom was an ancient Tamil state in South India. The Pandyans ruled from Madurai, and occupied the southernmost parts of the Indian peninsula, and parts of the south east too.

The Pandyans excelled in both trade and literature. They controlled the pearl fisheries along the south Indian coast, between Sri Lanka and India, which produced one of the finest pearls known in the ancient world.

The Chola Dynasty was a Tamil dynasty that originated in the fertile valley of the Cauveri River. Karikala Chola was the most famous among the early Chola kings, while Rajaraja Chola, Rajendra Chola and

Kulothunga Chola I were notable emperors of the medieval Cholas.

The Chola capital was at Uraiyur. They were great patrons of Tamil literature

## Why is Tamil considered the oldest of the Dravidian languages?

**There is some confusion among scholars as to which is the oldest Dravidian language. It is generally accepted that Kannada is the oldest spoken language, for it is at least 2000 years old, while Telugu is the most widely spoken. At the same time Tamil has the oldest literary works,**

*Statue of sage Agasty*

and their zeal in building temples have resulted in some great works of Tamil literature and architecture. The Chola kings were avid builders and envisioned the temples in their kingdoms not only as places of worship, but also as centres of economic activity.

Kerala, and some parts of southern Tamil Nadu formed the erstwhile Chera kingdom. They rivaled the neighboring dynasties of Cholas and Pandyans in prosperity. The Cheras had strong overseas trade links with the Romans in natural produce such as spices, ivory and sandal.

In all these kingdoms, the land was fertile and, rice, sugarcane, fruits and pepper were grown in abundance. Their palaces were well decorated and filled with beautiful objects. So, on the whole, it was a time of prosperity.

**and Tamil literature goes back several centuries before the birth of Christ.**

**According to legend, Tamil was a gift from the sage Agastya to mankind, and he was also the first grammarian in Tamil. Malayalam, the language of Kerala, is believed to have evolved from Tamil much later.**

## Why was the southern part of the country known as Dakshinapatha?

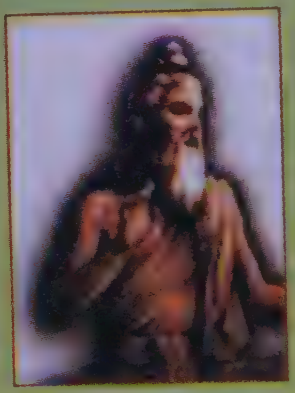
Did you know that the word 'dakshinapatha' is derived from the roots of two Sanskrit words dakshina for south, and patha for road? The ancient texts use the expression Dakshinpatha as a name for both the southern high road, and for that part of India that lies south of the Vindhya Mountains and the Narmada River.

The first reference to Dakshinapatha occurs in the Rig Veda where it refers to the region of exile. In the opinion of several scholars, this means the areas in the south beyond the limits of the Rig Vedic culture. Both the Mahabharatha and Ramayana also refer to Dakshinapatha. Today, we call this region, the Deccan.

## Why are the Sangams important to us today?

Tamil was the oldest literary language of south India. The first period of Tamil literature is associated with the Sangam Era.

Tamil tradition refers to three literary academic meetings called by the Pandyan kings, where poets and scholars assembled, along with kings and princes. These assemblies were called Sangams and they met at Madurai between 500 BC and AD 500. The first was believed to be attended by legendary sages, but its entire works have perished.



Of the second Sangam, only one work survives-Tolkappiyam. It is a work on Tamil grammar, literature, tradition and sociology. The poets of the third Sangam wrote Ettutogai or eight anthologies. These anthologies contain well over 2,000 poems ascribed to more than 200 authors.

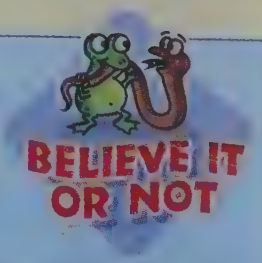
The Sangams are of great importance to us not only for their literary value, but because they are one of the main sources used for documenting the early history of the ancient Tamil country.

## Why did Thirukural become so popular? Who wrote it?

Thirukural is an important work of Tamil literature by the poet Thiruvalluvar. It is written in a poetic form called Kural, which means rhyming couplet. It is considered to be the first work to focus on ethics and expounds various aspects of life.

*Statue of Thiruvalluvar at Kanyakumari*

## BALD TO-GETHERNESS!




Emperor Theophilus, ruler of the Eastern Roman Empire from AD 829 to 842, lost all his hair and became completely bald in the year AD 840. He immediately issued an edict that every man, woman, and child in his kingdom would have to shave his or her head too! The penalty for not obeying this royal command was death!

Thiruvalluvar was a sage and philosopher who is belived to have written Thirukural about 2000 years ago. It has an orderly arrangement of 1330 Tamil couplets, which are divided into 133 chapters. Each chapter has a specific subject ranging from 'ploughing a piece of land' to 'ruling a country'. Themes such as virtue, love and morals, happiness and prosperity are written in verses that are simple and short.

Thirukural is considered to be an all-time Tamil classic which has been translated into most Indian languages, and some European languages as well.

The popularity of Thirukural lies in the fact that it has something noble for the ordinary man, the administrator, the king and the ascetic. It is global in perspective, and it is as timely today as when it was written hundreds of years ago.

### What is epigraphy?

Epigraphy is the study of inscriptions, especially old ones. Historians have deciphered numerous inscriptions from many parts of the country. These inscriptions were engraved not only on stones or metals, but also on clay, crystals, and ivory. Ashoka's inscriptions on stone and metal are the earliest records that have been unravelled so far.

# THE GUPTA DYNASTY

## Which were the famous Gupta Kings?

The Gupta Empire was one of the largest political and military empires in the ancient world. It was ruled by members of the Gupta dynasty from around AD 320 to 600.

The Gupta dynasty which followed the Kushana dynasty, ruled an empire that covered most of northern India, the region presently in Pakistan, and what is now western India and Bangladesh.

*Rock painting of a Gupta prince in the caves of Ajanta.*

The dynasty was established by Sri Gupta. However, very little is known about the first two rulers, Sri Gupta and Ghatokacha. The most famous Gupta rulers were Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, and Chandragupta II or Vikramaditya.

Chandragupta I conquered much of Magadha, Prayaga and Saketa. His empire stretched from the river Ganges to Allahabad. He was the first of the Guptas to be referred to as 'Maharajadhiraja' or 'King of Kings', which was indeed a high and mighty title.

Samudragupta expanded the empire until it extended from the Himalayas to the river Narmada, and from the Brahmaputra to the Yamuna.

Samudragupta was not only a great warrior, but also a great patron of art and literature. He was a poet and musician himself. He was a firm believer in Hinduism, but was considerate of other religions, and allowed Sri Lankan buddhist king to build a monastery at Bodh Gaya.

Chandragupta II called himself Vikramaditya. He extended the empire from coast-to-coast and established a second trading capital at Ujjain. His reign is remembered for its very influential style of Hindu art, liter

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ture, culture and science. The last two Gupta rulers were Kumaragupta and Skandagupta.

## Why did Chandragupta II call himself Vikramaditya?

The name Vikramaditya means 'Sun of Prowess'. Chandragupta II took this name because of his many conquests, which brought the whole of western India under the Gupta rule, and established an empire that stretched from the Arabian sea in the West, to the Bay of Bengal in the east.

*Statue of Vikramaditya*

There are many stories and legends about Vikramaditya. He was an ideal king, who was as wise as he was brave and strong. He was a great patron of arts, and nine great figures of ancient literature known as the nava ratnas (nine gems), graced his court.

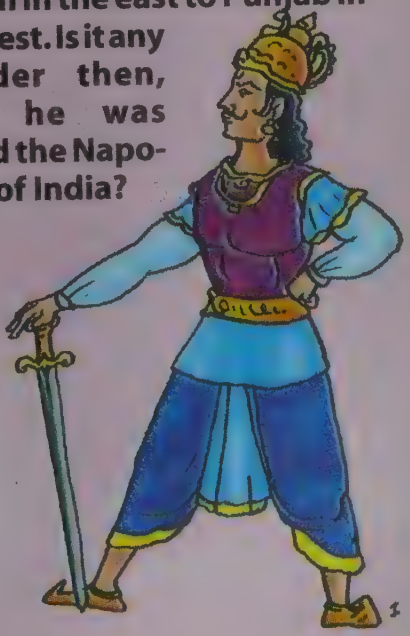
Matchless in war, and matchless in forgiveness, and an excellent ruler, he won the hearts of his people. His reign saw an era of peace and prosperity.

## Why is Samudragupta known as the Indian Napoleon?

**Samudragupta, ruler of the Gupta Empire and successor to Chandragupta I, is considered to be one of the greatest military geniuses in Indian history. It is said that he fought in over a hundred battles which left scars all over his body.**

**Samudragupta defeated four kings of northern India, twelve kings of the Deccan, battled against the Sakas, and received tribute from many rulers, including the ruler of today's Sri Lanka.**

**Samudragupta performed the Ashvamedha sacrifice to mark his sovereignity over lands that stretched from Assam in the east to Punjab in the west. Is it any wonder then, that he was called the Napoleon of India?**



**Why is the Gupta period called the Golden Age in Indian history?**

During the reign of the Guptas, giant strides were made in science, mathematics, astronomy, religion and Indian philosophy. The peace and prosperity created under the leadership of the Guptas enabled the pursuit of scientific and artistic endeavors. Music, architecture, sculptures and painting was at its best during the period of Gupta rule.

The stone temples of Deogarh and Bhitergaon are a few specimens of Gupta excellence in architecture and sculpture. Another area of Gupta expertise was their metallurgical skill. Various copper statues and images of Buddha reflect the craftsmanship of the Gupta period. The pillar at Delhi made of iron at the time of Samudragupta is another awe-inspiring monument.

*A stone carving from the Gupta era*

*A wall painting at Ajanta caves*

Many of the finest paintings of ancient India were executed during the Gupta period, the best example being the murals at Ajanta caves. It was also a golden age for Buddhist art. Uniform artistic standards were set chiefly by workshops in Mathura and Sarnath.

The Gupta reign saw the exchange of intellectual ideas, which is attributed to royal patronage and contacts with foreign people of both east and west. The greatest Sanskrit poet, Kalidasa, who wrote Meghdoot and Kumarsambhava was in Vikramaditya's court. Shakuntalam, the great play of Kalidasa, exemplifies the literary craftsmanship of this period.

The Panchatantra, a collection of fables, was another popular work written during the Gupta age. The Sanskrit dramas Mricha-katika and Mudra Rakshasa were written during Gupta reign too.

This period also saw many celebrated astronomers like Aryabhatta, as well as legal experts and efficient administrators. The decimal numeral system, including the concept of zero, was invented in India during the reign of the Guptas.

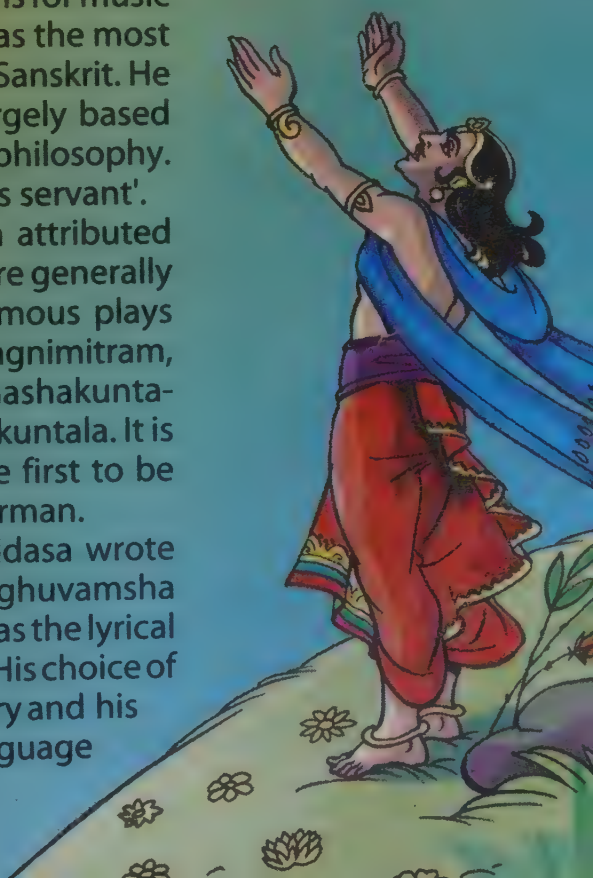
The cities were clean, well planned and prosperous, the markets full of different things to buy. Trade flourished, and gold coins were plentiful. Education was considered to be important and the Nalanda University was built during this time.

**Why was Kalidasa considered the most outstanding figure of the Gupta period?**

Kalidasa resided at the court of the Gupta king Chandra Gupta II, in Pataliputra. He wrote poems of epic proportions for music and dance and he is regarded as the most outstanding writer of classical Sanskrit. He wrote his plays and poetry largely based around Hindu mythology and philosophy. His name means, literally, 'Kali's servant'.

Numerous works have been attributed to his authorship. Only seven are generally considered genuine. Three famous plays written by Kalidasa are Mâlavikagnimitram, Vikramorvasiya and Abhijñânashakuntalam. The last is the story of Shakuntala. It is the most famous, and was the first to be translated into English and German.

In addition to his plays, Kalidasa wrote two surviving epic poems Raghuvamsha and Kumarasambhava, as well as the lyrical Meghaduta and Ritusamhâra. His choice of words, the beauty of his imagery and his complete control over the language made him the most outstanding literary figure of the Gupta period.



**Which Chinese traveller visited India during Chandragupta's reign?**

**Fa-Hien was the first Chinese Buddhist pilgrim to leave an account of his travels to Central Asia, India, and Sri Lanka. He visited India during Chandragupta's reign in search of great Buddhist books and monuments. He described everything that he saw in his notes and observations.**

**Fa-Hein found that the Buddhists and Brahmins lived peacefully together, but that the caste system had become very rigid. He was full of wonder at the many beautiful Buddhist monasteries that he saw, especially the Ajanta caves with their breath taking murals. Fa-Hien stayed in India for about eleven years and then left for Sri Lanka.**

**Who was the great mathematician of the Gupta period?**

Aryabhatta was a great mathematician and astronomer, who lived in the Gupta period. At the age of twenty-three, he wrote his small but famous work on astronomy, the Aryabhatiya. In it, he organized and combined the existing knowledge of astronomy and mathematics.

Aryabhatta was the first astronomer to mention that day and night are caused by the rotation of the earth about its axis. He stated that the moon and planets shine by reflected sunlight, and that eclipses are caused by the shadows cast by the sun and the moon that falling on earth. The other contributions that Aryabhatta made towards pure mathematics were his approximation of 'pi', and his sine tables.

Aryabhatta's name spread rapidly and disciples gathered from all over to see him. Among his most famous disciples were Bhaskara I, Sankaranarayana, Suryadeva, and Nilkantha.

## Why was Nalanda considered a great university?

Nalanda is the name of an ancient university in India. The name is a Sanskrit word that means 'giver of knowledge'. It was founded in the 5th century by the Gupta emperors. The subjects taught at Nalanda University covered every field of learning.

A long succession of kings from 5th to 12th century extended their royal patronage to ensure the progress and prosperity of Nalanda. The university received royal patronage of the great emperor Harshavardhana of Kannauj.

*Remains of the Nalanda university*

Foreign students were also attracted to this great centre of learning. During its heydays, it was a flourishing residential university with over ten thousand students, and fifteen hundred teachers. Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim spent three years at Nalanda. It has been called one of the first great universities in recorded history.

## Why was Vikramashila University founded? Who was its founder?

Vikramashila University was one of the two most important centres of Buddhist learning in India, along with Nalanda University. King Dharmapala established Vikramashila mainly because there was a decline in the quality of scholarship at Nalanda.

Vikramashila University grew to become the intellectual centre for Tantric Buddhism. In the beginning of the 11th century AD, during the reign of King Ramapala, there were one hundred and sixty teachers and a thousand students in the monastery.

The entire campus was circular in structure and spread out within a radius of nearly 150 miles. There were 53 rooms meant for tantric practice, another 54 for general use, and 17 monastic cells opening into the verandahs. The university was established primarily to spread Buddhism.

# DECCAN AND SOUTH INDIA DURING THE GUPTA DYNASTY

### Why was the first ruler of the Vakatakas called Vindhya-sakti?

The Vakatakas, an Indian dynasty, ruled parts of today's Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh from the third century to fifth century. They came into power after the decline of the Satavahanas, and ruled about the same time as the Guptas.

The Vakatakas were brahmins. The dynasty was founded by Vindhyasakti, who took his name from the goddess Vindhya, after whom the mountains were named. The next ruler was Pravarasena-1 who called himself a 'Samrat' and conducted wars with the Naga kings.

Since all the Vakataka kings were brahmins, they gifted land to the brahmins too. Their reign was noted for the encouragement they gave to arts and literature.

### Why does the Ikshvaku dynasty have mythological significance?

The Ikshvakus were one of the earliest dynasties of Andhra

*The Iron pillar at Delhi*

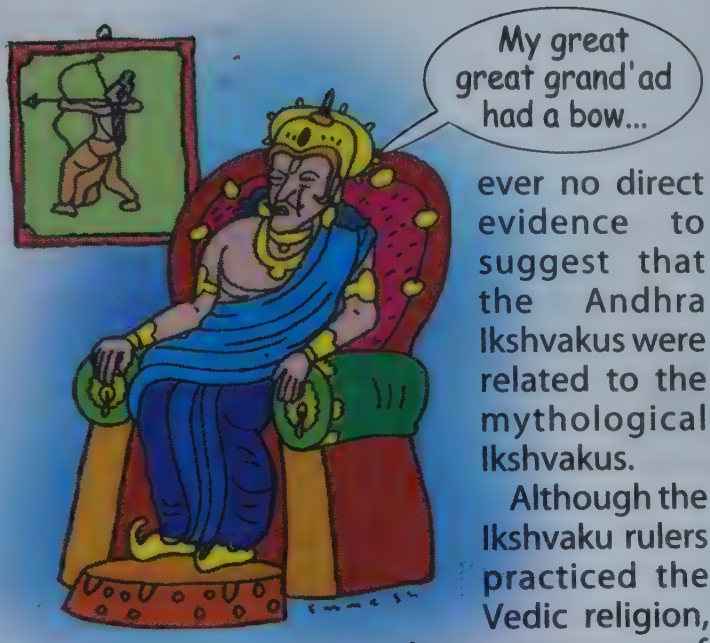
### Why is the Iron Pillar at Meharauli famous?

The iron pillar located at Mehrauli village on the outskirts of Delhi, has fascinated scientists and ordinary people for centuries. Scholars consider the pillar to be from the early Gupta period.

It is a wonder that such a huge metallic object could be fashioned so many centuries ago. But most amazing is the fact that it has not rusted at all, despite being exposed to the sun, rain, and wind through all these ages. Chemical anal-yses have indicated that the pillar was astonishingly pure or low in carbon compared with modern commercial iron, and historians have termed it 'The Rustless Wonder.'

Pradesh. They ruled the eastern territory along the Krishna river during the later half of the second century. Their capital was Vijayapuri.

Some scholars have suggested that this dynasty was related to the ancient Ikshvakus of Hindu mythology. Lord Rama of the Ramayana, who is considered as the incarnation of Vishnu, belonged to the line of Ikshvaku. There is however no direct evidence to suggest that the Andhra Ikshvakus were related to the mythological Ikshvakus.




Although the Ikshvaku rulers practiced the Vedic religion, they were also great sponsors of Buddhism. Buddhism was at its height in the Andhra country during their reign.

**Why have the Kadambas won a special place in history?**

**The Kadamba dynasty was an ancient royal dynasty of Karnataka that ruled from Banavasi in present day Uttara Kannada district. The dynasty was founded by Mayurasharma in AD 345. It is believed that he went to Kancheevaram to study the Vedas, but fought with a Pallava guard there, and left. In frustration, he went to war with the Pallavas, and conquered some of their territories.**

**One of his successors, Kakusthavarma, was a powerful ruler, and even the kings of the Gupta dynasty cultivated relationships with his family. One of the later descendants, king Shivakoti adopted Jainism after tiring of endless battles.**

**The Kadambas have won a special place in history for being the first dynasty to use Kannada at the administrative level.**

*Shore temple at Mahabalipuram*

## Why was the Pallava kingdom known as Tondainadu?

The Pallavas were a powerful tribe that ruled over an area called Thondaimandalam. When their capital Pallavapuri was washed away by the sea, they moved downwards to Kanchipuram. The Pallavas settled there and established a prosperous kingdom.

This war loving race became a powerful dynasty in the sixth century when Mahendravarman ascended the throne. He was a learned man, and he started work on the cave temples at Mahabalipuram. In fact, these famous shore temples and stone chariots are an important Pallava contribution to our architectural heritage.

The Pallava kingdom was also called Tondainadu, for 'Pallava' is the Prakrit-Sanskrit word for Tondai or creeper. They ruled for five hundred years, and have left a permanent mark in the field of art and architecture.

**Which were the two epics written in Tamil around the 6th Century AD?**

**Two great epics in Tamil were written around the sixth century. They were Shilappadikaram, and Manimekalai.**

**The Tamil epic poem Shilappadikaram is one of the great classics of ancient Indian literature. It was written by Ilango Adigal, and is an enormously detailed book of the people of his time.**

**The story is about a husband and wife, Kovalan and Kannaki, and Kovalan's lover, Madhavi. It is a tale packed with myth, history, descriptions of city and country life and information about religious rites, the caste system, military lore and much more.**

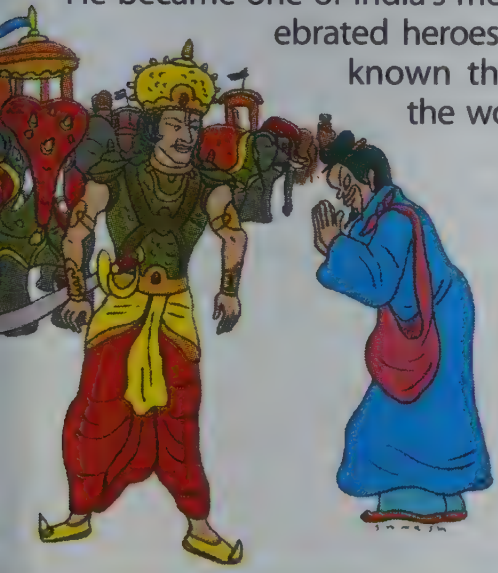
**Manimekalai, written by Seethalai Saathanar, is another of the masterpieces of Tamil literature. It is a sequel to Shilappadikaram, and tells the story of the daughter of Kovalan and Madhavi.**

# HARSHA AND OTHER KINGS

## Why is Harsha linked with China?

Harsha was the ruler of a northern Indian empire that stretched from Magadha to Kashmir, Gujarat and Sind. He became king in AD 606 when he was just sixteen, after defeating his enemies.

Harsha was a gifted warrior and administrator, a sensitive poet and playwright. He became one of India's most celebrated heroes. He is known through the works of the writer Bana, and of the Chinese pilgrim Hieun Tsang.



Hieun Tsang visited the capital of Harsha's kingdom, and describes it as a beautiful, well defended city of gardens and tanks. Its citizens appeared happy and prosperous. However, Hieun Tsang also found that the older cities of Shravasti and Pataliputra were neglected.

In AD 641 Harsha sent an envoy to the Chinese emperor, and established the first diplomatic relations between India and China.

## Who were the Pratiharas?

**The Pratiharas was an Indian dynasty that ruled a large kingdom in northern India from the 6th to the 11th centuries. The branch of the Pratiharas who ruled in the Gurjarat was the Gurjaras. The Pratihara dynasty started well under the ruler Nagabhattal. The greatest Pratihara king was Bhoja, who succeeded in 836. After AD 1036, the dynasty gradually declined.**

*One of the temples at Khajuraho*

### Why are the Khajuraho temples considered unique?

The Khajuraho temples were constructed between AD 950 and 1050 by the Chandela Rajputs in what is today Madhya Pradesh. Khajuraho gets its name from the Khajur or date palm tree which grows abundantly here.

Originally there were eighty-five temples, of which only twenty-two still exist. The murals testify to the skill of the craftsmen, as well as to the vision of the Chandela Rajputs.

A unique feature of the Khajuraho temples is that, contrary to custom, they are not enclosed within walls, but stand on a high terrace of solid masonry, soaring above their surroundings.

The Khajuraho group of monuments has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

### What was Tantricism?

**Tantricism is a broad religious movement which emerged in east India and soon became popular.**

**Tantricism is primarily a set of ritual practices involving the chanting of mantras, and also involves the use of mudras or gestures.**

**Diagrams known as yantras or mandals, and sacrifices are also used with a hope to obtain whatever one desires.**

**Tantric methods were also used to attain spiritual regeneration. It was open to all castes and to women.**

## Why did the power of the Rajputs decline?

The Rajputs got their name from the Sanskrit 'rajaputra' which means 'son of a king.' They

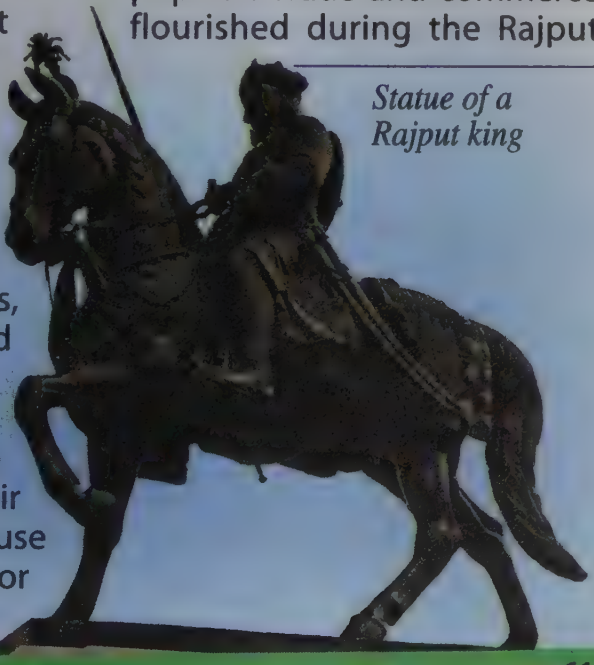
*Jaisalmer palace of the Rajputs of Rajasthan*

are generally Kshatriyas from North India and Gujarat and are a war-loving, land owning community.

They had many outstanding virtues and a spirit of chivalry. The Rajputs were generous and merciful even to enemies, if the latter submitted and sought shelter. Even when they were victorious, they did not resort to wholesale massacre of their enemies. They did not cause needless misery to the poor and innocent people. They offered the stiffest resistance to foreign invaders, but if they once submitted and took an oath of fidelity, they remained faithful to their word of honour.

Agriculture was the main profession of the people. The poor toiled for the construction of temples, forts and palaces, irrigation works, reservoirs, tanks, wells and canals.

The upper classes lived in palatial buildings and enjoyed all kinds of comforts. They had even slaves. There were many festivals and fairs throughout the year. Music, dancing, drama, dice, hunting and chess, were popular. Trade and commerce flourished during the Rajput



*Statue of a Rajput king*

period. Big cities were linked up with roads. The people were wealthy.

Although the Rajputs were strong and brave, they failed to accomplish much. That was partly due to their clannish patriotism. They cared only for their chiefs and clans. They did not bother about the country as a whole. They were not able to combine together and defeat foreign invaders. They kept on quarreling among themselves, and this eventually led to their decline.

*A Rajput fort in Rajasthan*

## Why is Sati banned today?

Sati is the traditional Hindu practice of a widow burning herself on her husband's funeral pyre.

'Sati' means a virtuous woman. A woman who dies after burning herself on her husband's funeral fire was considered most virtuous, and was believed to directly go to heaven.

*Rajaram Mohan Roy*

Sati was prevalent among certain sects of the society in ancient India. The woman who committed Sati was worshipped as a goddess, and temples were built in her memory.

The famous Indian social reformer Rajaram Mohan Roy, through his organization Brahmo Samaj was among the first who fought to eliminate Sati. Sati was stopped by the British in 1829, and continues to be banned today as it is a cruel and inhuman practice.

## Who destroyed the Shahi kingdom?

The Hindu Shahi dynasty ruled much of the Punjab as well as western Afghan

*A deserted Shahi temple in Afghanistan*

stan, from the mid-9th to the early 11th centuries. In AD 977, the Turkish ruler Sabuktigin acceded to the throne of the small kingdom of Ghazni in central Afghanistan. In the 980s, Subuktigin conquered the Shahis, extending his rule from the Khyber Pass, to the ndus.

After his death in AD 997, his son Mahmud assumed power n Ghazni. He expanded his father's kingdom far to the west and east through military conquest. He invaded the Punjab and northern India seventeen times during his reign, conquering the Shahi kingdom and extending his rule across the Punjab as far as the upper Yamuna.

**Who was Bhavabuti?**

**Bhavabhuti was an 8th century scholar of India whose dramas, written in Sanskrit are noted for their suspense and vivid characterization. Bhavabhuti has written three dramas-Mahaviracharitam, Malati Madhavam and Uttara Ramacharitam.**

**The Mahaviracharitram is based on the Ramayana of Valmiki. It depicts the character of Shri Rama, showing his bravery and valour during his youth.**

**The love of Malati and Madhava is depicted in the drama Malati Madhavam. Uttara Ramacharitam is also based on the Ramayana. It is an account of the life of Rama after his return from exile.**

**In point of ability and fame, Bhavabhuti stands second only to Kalidasa in the field of Sanskrit dramatic literature.**

# SOUTH INDIA BETWEEN AD 600-1200

## Who established the Chalukya kingdom?

The Chalukyas were a South Indian dynasty that ruled in the Deccan and are considered to be natives of the Karnataka region.

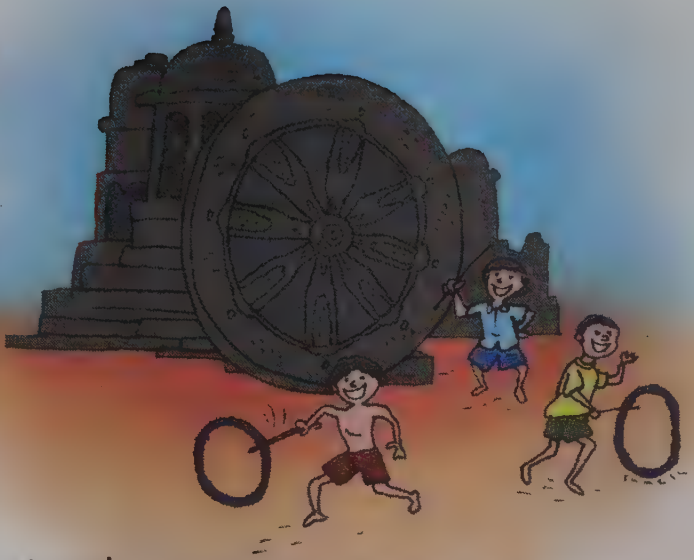
The Chalukya Kingdom was established in the 6th century AD by Pulakeshin-I. He founded Vatapi which is modern Badami in Bijapur district, and made it his capital.

Pulakeshin-II was the greatest ruler of the Chalukya dynasty. He ruled from AD 608 to 642. In this long reign, he consolidated his authority in Maharashtra and conquered large parts of the Deccan. His greatest achievement was his victory in the defensive war against Harshvardhan in AD 620. In AD 641, the Chinese pilgrim Hieun Tsang, visited the kingdom and said that the king was served by his nobles with perfect loyalty.

Pulakeshin was succeeded by his son Vikramaditya who was also as great a ruler as his father. His great grandson Vikramaditya II was also a great warrior. In AD 753, the Chalukyas were overthrown by a chief named Dantidurga, who laid the foundation of the next great empire of Karnataka and Maharashtra, that of Rashtrakutas.

*Badami temple built by Pulakeshin-I*

## Why is the Konark temple made like a chariot?



The Konark temple is dedicated to Surya, the Sun God, and was built during the reign of the eastern Ganga King, Narasimha Deva in Orissa. It is unique for its supremely imaginative character. The structure as a whole is conceived of as a 'rath' or temple on wheels.

The Konark temple is in the shape of a chariot on twenty four wheels, representing the winged chariot of time, in which the Sun God rides. The base of the temple is an immense terrace with twelve giant wheels on either side, each ten feet long. The carriage of the Sun God is drawn by seven splendidly carved horses straining their necks to pull the massive chariot.

The Konark temple is hailed as the supreme achievement of the architectural genius of Orissa.

## Who built the first mosque in India?

The last known Chera ruler, Cheraman Perumal converted to Islam, and built the first mosque in India around AD 629. This mosque is situated at present day Kodungalloor in Kerala.

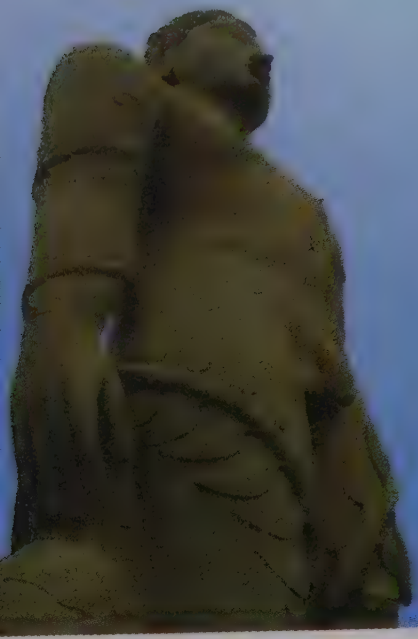
Kerala and parts of southern Tamil Nadu formed the Chera kingdom. They ruled from ancient times until around the 15th century AD with Tiruvanchikulam near Kodungalloor as their main capital. The earliest ruler of repute of Cheras was Udayan Cheralatan. The most renowned Chera ruler was Senguttuvan.

The Cheras rivaled the neighboring dynasties of Cholas and Pandyas in prosperity. Trade flourished throughout their reign. Spices, ivory, timber, pearls and gems were exported to Egypt, Rome, Greece, Phoenicia, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia.

The Cheras faded from history by the 8th century AD.

**Why is Bahubali famous?**

**Bahubali is a great name in Jain legends. His story is an example of the inner strength of the entire culture of India.**



**Bahubali's elder brother, Bharat was envious of his wealth, grandeur, strength and success, and fought against him. Bahubali defeated his brother and could have become an emperor. Instead, he returned everything to his brother and went away to meditate on God. He enriched the lives of his fellowmen with the light he received.**

**A wonderful statue of Lord Bahubali is located on top of a hillock at Shravana belagola in the Hassan district of Karnataka. It is a sacred place for Jains. This statue of Gommateshwara , which is another name for Bahubali, is carved out of a single stone. It is 57 feet high. In AD 981, Chavundaraya, the minister of the Ganga King Rachamalla had this statue carved.**

## Who built the royal city of Kumbakonam?

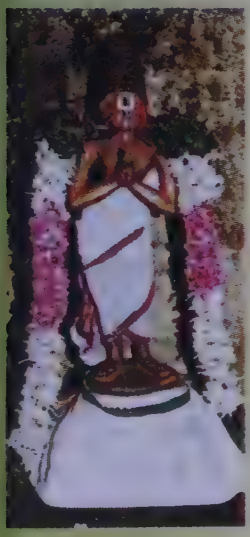
The royal city of Kumbakonam and the famous Shiva temple there, were built by one of the greatest kings of Chola dynasty, Rajendra-1.

The Chola Kingdom was a very ancient one. It was in the 8th century AD that the Cholas' glory began to shine, when the power of the Pallavas declined. By the 10th century AD, the Cholas took the holy city of Madurai from the Pandyas, and moved further down south to invade Sri Lanka. The Cholas also defeated the Chalukyas in north east Deccan.

The greatest triumph was brought by Rajendra-1 when he marched right up to the banks of the holy river Ganga in Bengal. To celebrate his achievement, he built the royal city of Kumbakonam and constructed a temple for Lord Shiva called Gangaikondacholapuram. This temple is a masterpiece of South Indian architecture.

By the beginning of the thirteenth century AD, the Chola empire began to decline.

*The only woman Alwar saint, Tirumangai Alwar*



*Periyalvar, one of the Alwar saints*

## Why did the Nayanar and Alwar saints capture the hearts of the people?

Alwar means one who is 'immersed' in the experience of God. There were twelve Alwar saints, who came from all walks of life and all strata of society. Their ranks included one woman too.

Between the fifth and ninth century, in the Tamil speaking region of South India, these saints revitalized religion in India. Traveling from place to place, from temple to temple, from holy site to holy site, they composed exceedingly beautiful poetry to their divine beloved Vishnu.

*Some of the Nayanar saints*

The Nayanars were the sixty-three devotees of Lord Shiva who lived before or during the life time of Sundaramurthy Nayanar. The three most famous saints are Appar, Sundarar and Sambandar. Some of the Nayanars were learned scholars, while others did not have any formal schooling. The unifying factor is their extreme devotion to Lord Shiva.

The words of The Nayanars and Alwars cut across all barriers of caste and class. In doing so, they sculpted a new religious heritage of intensely emotional bhakti, or love of the divine, whose impact is still felt today in Indian religious life.

### Why is the Lingayat movement very significant?

The Lingayat movement goes back to the saint-poet Basavanna, who lived and taught in the northern part of Karnataka during the 12th century. Though Basavanna was born a brahmin, he rebelled against the rigid practices of the caste system. He believed in a society where all were equal, and women were equal to men. Soon, his philosophy began attracting large numbers of people and the Lingayat movement was born.

*Basavanna*

The Lingayats believe only in one God, they rejected the Vedas, the authority of the brahmins, and all forms of sacrifice. They championed the cause of the downtrodden and rebelled against a powerful system which promoted social inequality through the caste system.

### Why were Pampa, Ponna and Ranna considered the 'three gems' of Kannada literature?

In the 10th century, a new trend in Kannada literature was started by the 'Three Gems' of Kannada literature-Pampa, Ponna and Ranna. They extensively used the Champu style which is a blend of prose and verse. The trio wrote extensively on episodes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Jain legends.

Of the three, Pampa was the adikavi or the 'first of poets', having attained that stature with two great epics, Vikramarjuna Vijaya, and Adipurana.

### Who was Purandara Das?

**Purandara Das was a saint, a poet and musician of Karnataka. He is indeed the grandfather of Karnataka music. The present day theory and practice of music is due entirely to him. It was he who prescribed the elementary lessons in Karnataka music. Even Thyagaraja drew inspiration from him. His original name was Srinivas Naik.**

## What is Dashakumaracharitra?

Dashakumaracharitra was a popular work written by Dandin, a Sanskrit writer of poetic romances who lived during the sixth century. It relates the adventures and romances of the ten princes, who are the heroes of this work.

*Painting of a Sanskrit writer*

The framework of the narratives is simple. It is about ten princes who got separated, but planned to meet again in Ujjain. In this romance, the author shows great powers of characterization as he draws realistic scenes of life. His style is easy and unaffected and full of wit and humour.

## Why is Kerala known as the land of spices? To which kingdom was it attached in ancient times?

**The land known today as Kerala was part of the ancient kingdom of the Cheras. From very early times, pepper and other spices like cloves, cinnamon, and cardamom were taken back from this kingdom by travellers from Europe, Arabia, and China. Pepper, especially was in great demand and this region came to be known as 'The Land of Spices.'**

**The Romans loved pepper, and bought huge quantities of pepper for which they paid in gold and silver. In fact, hoards of gold coins have been buried in South India as a result of this trade in spices.**

# GHAZNI AND GHUR

**Why are the kingdoms of Ghazni and Ghur significant in Indian history?**

The invasion of India by the rulers of Ghazni and Ghur marked the beginning of a new era in Indian history. These two kingdoms were located in what is now Afghanistan. When the rulers of these kingdoms swept into India with their armies, their conquests marked the beginning of the appearance of Islam in the sub continent. Their presence in India also heralded a cultural invasion and cultural transformation that had never before been experienced in the two thousand years before their arrival.

*Mahmud Ghazni-A painting*

*A tower in Ghazni about AD 1000*

**Why did Mahmud Ghazni take over Punjab and Multan?**

Mahmud was the son of a Turkish slave, who in AD 977, became the ruler of Ghazni. When Mahmud ascended the throne in AD 998 at the age of twenty-seven, he already showed remarkable administrative ability and statesmanship. At the time of his accession, Ghazni was a small kingdom. The young and ambitious Mahmud aspired to be a great monarch.

Mahmud heard that India was a very rich country, and that her temples were full of gold and precious stones. He wanted to make Ghazni rich and powerful too, so he decided to invade India in order to get the riches of the Indian kingdoms. He could then use these treasures to build a vast empire.

Mahmud is said to have vowed to invade India once a year and in fact, led about seventeen such

expeditions. The first campaign began in AD1001, and the last in AD 1026. The first expeditions were aimed against the Punjab and northeastern India. He also attacked Multan, one of the oldest cities in South Asia which was known as the city of gold for the treasures in its temples. In his last campaign, Mahmud reached Somnath on the southern coast of Gujarat.

Mahmud returned from his conquests with his booty, and set about transforming Ghazni into a great centre of art and culture. He established colleges, laid out gardens, and built mosques, and palaces. Soon, Ghazni was transformed into the most brilliant cultural centre in Central Asia.

**Why is Mohammad Ghori considered one of the most important rulers of the Ghurs?**

Ghor, or Ghur, an ancient kingdom of Afghanistan is a country of lofty mountains, beautiful valleys, and of numerous strongholds held by a variety of hill chieftains. The two most powerful kings of Ghur were Ghiyasuddin Mohammad, who ruled at Ghur, and Muizuddin Mohammad who took over Ghazni.

Muizuddin Mohammad, who was also known as Mohammad Ghori, captured Sind and Punjab. He was the next important Muslim ruler who influenced Indian history. Mohammad Ghori tried to capture Delhi and met Prithvi Raj Chauhan in the first battle of Tarain. He was defeated. In the very next year in AD 1192, both the armies met again at Tarain. This time Mohammad cleverly defeated Prithvi Raj Chauhan.

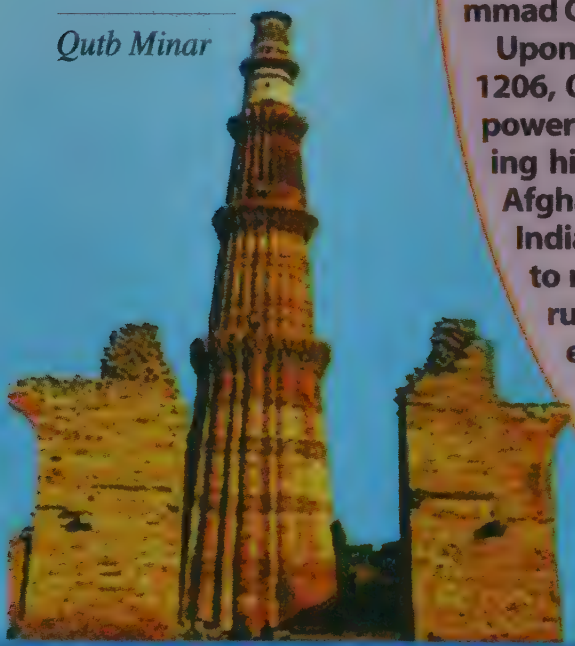
In AD 1193, Mohammad Ghori defeated the Gahadavala king Jayachandra, in the battle of Chandwar. Gwallior, Gujarat and Ajmer were also occupied by him in AD 1197. Mohammad Ghori died in AD 1206.

## Why were Qutb-ud-din and his successors called the Slave kings?

The Mamluk dynasty founded by Qutb-ud-din was also called the Slave dynasty. The reason for this is that it was established by slaves who were made into soldiers.

These slave soldiers rose, and earned a great reputation for courage, fighting skills, and organizational abilities. In time, they became great warriors and rulers in their own right. The slave kings were actually Ilbari Turks.

*Qutb Minar*



## Who was the first slave king to rule from Delhi?

**Qutb-ud-din is known as the founder of the Slave dynasty. When he was a child, he was captured and sold as a slave or mamluk. Qutb-ud-din was purchased by Sultan Mohammad Ghori, ruler of Ghor in central Afghanistan. He became a trusted slave-general of Mohammad Ghori.**

**Upon Mohammad Ghori's death in AD 1206, Qutb-ud-din Aibak, after a brief power struggle, succeeded in establishing himself as ruler of the empire in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and northern India. He became the first slave king to rule from Delhi. During his brief rule of four years, Qutb-ud-din's entire attention was devoted towards strengthening his position and kingdom.**

**He started the construction of the Qutb Minar in AD 1193.**

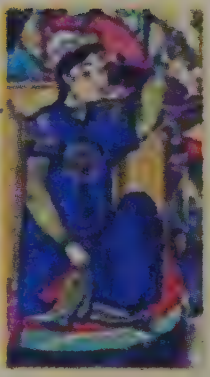
## Which Delhi ruler was given the title of 'Sultan' by the Khalifa?

Iltutmish was the third ruler of the Slave Dynasty. He was Qutb-ud-din's slave, but soon became his best general. In time, he married Qutb-ud-din's daughter. He then killed the son of Qutb-ud- din, and became the ruler of Delhi.

Iltutmish fought, and won many battles. He managed to get Bengal and Bihar under his control. He was given the title of 'Sultan' by the Khalifa, who was the head of the Muslims in Baghdad.

*Tomb of Iltutmish*

Iltutmish was gifted with brilliant qualities as a man, and extended his patronage to arts and letters. The completion of the structure of the famous Qutb Minar, stands as an imperishable testimony to his greatness.



*Razia Sultana*

## Who was the first woman ruler of Delhi?

Razia Sultana was the first female ruler of Delhi, and the daughter of Iltutmish. She was talented, wise and brave, an excellent administrator and a great warrior.

Razia had all the qualities of an efficient ruler and was more competent than her brothers. So Iltutmush, selected Razia as his successor. However, after his death one of his sons, Rukn-ud-din Firuz occupied the throne. He ruled Delhi for about seven months. In AD 1236, Razia Sultana defeated her brother with the support of the people of Delhi.

To rule the country with a strong hand, Razia shed her feminine get up and dressed in masculine clothes, whether it was in the court or in the battlefield. She brought about law and order in her territory. She was a great patron of art, and tried to improve the infrastructure of the country by encouraging trade, building roads, digging wells, and constructing schools and libraries.

**Why is Ghiyas-ud-din Balban considered to be the next powerful ruler after Razia Sultana?**

Ghiyas-ud-din Balban was the next powerful ruler of Delhi. He belonged to the Ilbari tribe of a well-to-do Turk family but had been captured by the Mongols and sold. Iltutmish, the Sultan of Delhi, later bought him as his slave.

*Balban*

From the very beginning, Balban was favoured by his master and soon became one of the forty nobles of Iltutmish's court. He gradually gained power during the rule of Nasir-ud-din Mahmud. In early AD 1266, he became the Sultan after the death of Nasir-ud-din.

Ghiyas-ud-din Balban believed that a king is the deputy of God on earth and had unparalleled powers. His court was a very disciplined one, and it is said that no one there even dared to smile!

Ghiays-ud-din Balban very efficiently put down rebellions that

*Alai Darwaza, southern gateway to Qutb Minar built by Ala-ud-din Khilji*

surrounded him during his reign. He brought back peace and order in the state and restored the power and prestige of the sultan after a period of thirty years.

**Who ruled Delhi after the Slave kings?**

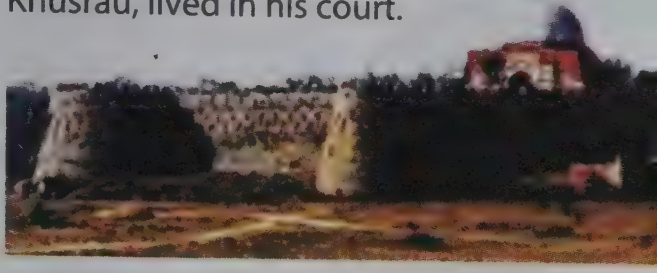
After the Slave sultans, the Khiljis came to the throne. The first Sultan of this dynasty was Jalal-ud-din Khilji. During his short reign, from AD 1290–1296, Jalal-ud-din suppressed a revolt by some of Balban's officers. He led an unsuccessful expedition against Ranthambhor, and defeated a substantial Mongol force on the banks of the Sind River.

In AD 1296, he was assassinated by his nephew and successor, Ala-ud-din Khilji.

## Why did Ala-ud-din Khilji call himself 'The Second Alexander'?

Ala-ud-din Khilji was the nephew and son-in-law of Jalal-ud-din Khilji. It was Jalal, who brought him up, because Ala-ud-din was fatherless. When Jalal became king, he appointed Ala-ud-din as the governor of Kara. Later, he became the Governor of Avadh too. Since Ala-ud-din was an ambitious man, he killed his father-in-law, and later on, became the ruler of Delhi.

Ala-ud-din's reign is marked by innovative administrative, and revenue reforms, market control regulations, and a whirlwind period of conquests. He described himself as the 'Second Alexander' on his own coinage and dreamt of founding a world-wide empire. One of the great Persian poets of Indian history, Amir Khusrau, lived in his court.



*Tughlaqabad*

## Why was Tughlaqabad called 'The Third City of Delhi'?

Tughlaqabad is one of India's largest fortresses, located in the south of Delhi. It is also called 'The Third City of Delhi' because it was built by the Tughlaqs, the third Muslim dynasty to rule from Delhi, after the Slave and Khilji dynasties.

Tughlaqabad was built by Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq. He dreamt of a beautiful yet impregnable fort to keep away the Mongol invaders. He was so passionate about his dream that he issued a dictate that all labourers in Delhi must work on the fort. The massive ramparts and battlements of this fort speak highly of the engineering skills of those who constructed it. It is said the fort was cursed by two saints, and was later abandoned.

## Who founded the Tughlaq dynasty?

Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq was the founder of the Tughlaq dynasty. Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq's original name was Gazi Malik. His father, Malik Tughlaq was a Turkish slave, and his mother was a Jat lady of the Punjab.

Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq started his career as a warden of the Marches under Ala-ud-din Khilji and played an important part against the Mongol invasions. He dethroned Khasrau, the usurper of the throne of Delhi, and was acclaimed as the Sultan by the nobles of the court in September 1320.

*Tomb of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq*

*Court of Mohammed bin Tughlaq*

## Why was Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq called a 'mixture of opposites'?

Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq was the Sultan of Delhi from AD 1325 to 1351. He succeeded to the Delhi throne after Ghiyas-ud-din's death in AD 1325.

Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq was a 'mixture of opposites'. On the one hand, he was brilliant, philanthropic, well educated, and was a great patron of arts. He was an authority on medicine and mathematics.

On the other hand, he could be cruel and foolish at times. He carried out several experiments during his rule which were utter failures. He undertook bizarre unachievable campaigns like trying to reverse Alexander's march into India and capturing

*Remains of Tughlaq capital at Delhi*

Afghanistan, Iran and Uzbekistan. After spending vast sums of money, the project was abandoned before it even began!

In AD 1327, he ordered his capital moved to Daulatabad, 1400 kilometres from Delhi! Thousands of citizens who were forced to move, died on the way. The monumental folly of the Sultan soon ended, when he decided to move back to Delhi. Some of his supporters had barely reached Daulatabad when they had to turn around!

He also attempted to fine-tune the money supply by introducing token money which also resulted in a historic blunder.

Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq managed to stay in power for twenty-six years. Unlike some of his predecessors, he is admired for his religious tolerance.

## Why did Mohammed bin Tughlaq's 'token money' fail?

During Muhammed-bin-Tughlaq's reign, the value of a silver coin was its actual worth in silver. When a shortage of silver arose, he decided to substitute silver coins with token copper ones that would have the same value of silver coins.

This is was actually a good idea. In fact today, all the currency we use today is 'token'. However, when Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq introduced copper currency, he made a critical mistake. He failed to put an official stamp on the coins. Soon, people started melting their copper vessels and every street had sprouted a mint. The treasury overflowed with counterfeits, and the economy eventually collapsed.

## Why is Firuz Shah Tughlaq considered a good ruler?

Firuz Shah Tughlaq succeeded his cousin Muhammed-bin-Tughlaq but due to widespread unrest, Firuz's realm was much smaller than Muhammed's. He was considered a good ruler because he was more interested in the welfare of his people, rather than in military conquests.

Many rest houses, gardens and tombs were built during his reign. A number of Islamic schools which provided Koranic education were opened to encourage literacy.

Firuz set up hospitals for the free treatment of the poor. He provided money for the marriage of girls belonging to poor families. He commissioned many public buildings in Delhi.

Firuz also lowered the land taxes that Muhammad had raised. He built over two hundred towns, and fifty dams for irrigation, bringing more land under cultivation for growing grain and fruit.

In his works, we see the vision of a humane person. His reign was quite peaceful, but since the empire was too large to control, his authority was reduced. Eventually, many of his provinces became independent.

## Which Mongol warrior invaded Delhi during the Tughlaq dynasty?

Timur of Samarkand was a great Mongol warrior. He had a large empire from southern Russia to the Indus and his army was modeled after the armies of Genghis Khan.

In Timur's time Samarkand was a great cultural centre and it produced textiles, pottery, bricks, tiles. It was a city of Turks, Arabs, Moors, Greeks and Armenians, with many languages spoken and many faiths.

With the excuse that Muslim rulers in India were being too tolerant towards Hindus, he led his army there in 1398. He plundered many cities and created great carnage and devastation in Delhi. Timur was pleased that he had penetrated India more deeply than had Alexander the Great or Genghis Khan. He returned from India laden with Indian artists, craftsmen, and booty

**Why was the Sayyid dynasty given this name? Who was its founder?**

The Sayyid dynasty succeeded the Tughlaq dynasty as rulers of the Delhi Sultanate. They reigned from AD 1414 to 1451. They called themselves by this name because they claimed to be the descendants of Prophet Mohammad or 'Sayyids'.

The Delhi Sultanate had been fatally weakened by the invasion of Timur. Timur had made Khizr Khan governor of Multan. Khizr Khan took over Delhi in 1414, thus launching the Sayyid dynasty.

*Khizr Khan on the battlefield*

Khizr Khan's authority was limited only to a few districts around Delhi which were often challenged by the Hindu Zamindars. Khizr Khan and his loyal ministers struggled hard during his seven years rule against these rebellions.

Khizr Khan died on May 20, 1421.

*Lodi Garden at Delhi. Several tombs situated in this garden belong to Sayyids and Lodis.*

**Who was Buhlul Lodi?**

**Buhlul Khan Lodi was an Afghan noble. He was a great soldier. Buhlul Khan seized the throne of Delhi on April 19 th, 1451 with the support of his minister Hamid Khan. He was the first Afghan ruler of Delhi.**

**After he had succeeded to the throne, he sought to strengthen his position by bringing in Afghans from the northwestern highlands, attracting them by grants of lands and estates. Energetic and ambitious, he overlooked no opportunity of extending his dominion. Buhlul Khan extended his territories over Gwalior, Jaunpur and upper Uttar Pradesh.**

## Why did Babar invade India?

**Zahir-ud-din Mohammad Babar, founder of the Mughal dynasty in India, was an excellent general and a wise ruler. He was invited to India by Daulat Khan Lodi, the Muslim Governor of Punjab, to fight against Ibrahim Lodi, ruler of Delhi.**

**Babar found the invitation very attractive, and he swept into India with his army. He was the first king to bring artillery to India. He met the forces of Ibrahim Lodi in the field of Panipat on 21st April 1526 and won this battle known in Indian history as the First battle of Panipat. This battle marked his conquest over Delhi, and changed the course of Indian history as well as the Mughal Empire forever.**

## Why did the Sultanate of Delhi decline?

The Sultanate of Delhi extended for over three and a quarter centuries, from AD 1206 to 1526. It gradually declined because it became too large to be controlled efficiently.

*Purana Qila, built by Sher Shah Suri*

Constant wars against invaders emptied the treasury, while the nobles were always fighting against each other too. The king and nobles lived in splendour while the common people were very poor. This led to widespread dissatisfaction amongst the subjects.

The decline of the Sultanate began in the time of Muhammed bin Tughlaq, and continued during the rule of the Sayyids and the Lodis. It ended with the victory of Babar over Ibrahim Lodi in the First Battle of Panipat.

**How did trade and the postal system function during the time of the Sultanate?**

During the time of the Sultanate of Delhi, India exported spices, sandalwood, perfumes, indigo, precious stones, sugar, rice and coconut. The main imports were gold, silver and Arabian horses.

Broad roads were built across the land, linking Peshawar to Sonegon, and Delhi to Daulatabad, with rest houses at regular intervals. Trade was mainly with Iraq and Khurasan on the Persian Gulf, and Jeddah and Aden on the Red Sea. There was also trade with East Africa, Sumatra, Malaysia, Borneo, and China.

*An old view of the Grand Trunk Road outside Lahore*

The first Sultan of Delhi, Qutb-ud-din Aibak created a messenger post system. This was expanded into the horse and foot runner service, by Ala-ud-din Khilji in 1296.

Important contributions in improving the postal system were made during the reign of Muhammed bin Tughlaq. Two different kinds of postal systems were introduced-mounted couriers travelling on horses, and the general couriers on foot. During the Tughlaq period, the postal officials also performed some police functions.

The postal system was completely reformed during the reign of Sher Shah Suri. He replaced runners with horses for conveyance of messages along the northern high road that he constructed, which is today known as the Grand Trunk Road. Sher Shah constructed 1,700 post houses employing nearly 3,400 postal messengers and horses.

**Who were the important Persian writers, during the Sultanate of Delhi?**

**Amir Khusrau, Ziauddin Barani, Afif, and Isami were the most important Persian writers during the Sultanate of Delhi. Amir Khusrau was a great poet who is known for his historical romances and poetry while the others were pure historians.**

**Why was the Wazir considered the most important official of the Sultanate? Who were the other main officials?**

In the Sultanate of Delhi, the Sultan was the head of the state and totally independent. The chief responsibilities of the Sultan were the protection of the state, the settlement of disputes, the defense of the realm of Islam, the enforcement of laws, the collection of taxes, and the welfare of people.

The most important post next to the Sultan was that of the Prime Minister, or the 'Wazir'. He was in charge of the entire financial administration of the kingdom, and all matters relating to income and expenditure. He had the powers to appoint the revenue officials, organize and collect revenue, and control the state expenditure.

The army was administered by Ariz-i-Mumalik, whose duty was to provide horses and rations to the soldiers. He was to assign different tasks to the soldiers and also was responsible for the transfers of military personnel. Even officers of the court who held military ranks received salaries from his office.

Law and order were controlled by the Qazi-i-Mumalik. He used to sit with the Sultan to give him legal advice. The Sultan used to sit at least twice a week to hear the complaints against the officials of the state.

**Why do we say that new trends in architecture started during the Delhi Sultanate?**

*The Qutb Minar*

During the time of the Sultanate of Delhi, a new style of architecture popularly referred to as the Indo-Islamic style of architecture developed

*The Alai Darwaza*

The Indo-Islamic style had elements of both the Islamic and Hindu styles of architecture. The Qutb Minar, the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, and the tomb of Iltutmish, which were constructed by different rulers of the Slave dynasty, heralded the birth of Indo-Islamic architecture.

Of these monuments, the Qutb Minar is a tower symbolizing the victory of the first Muslim rulers of India over the local people. The Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque was the first mosque to be built in India and is made up of the remnants of twenty-seven Hindu and Jain temples. The tomb of Iltutmish was the first Islamic tomb to be built in India.

The Alai Darwaza is a perfect specimen of architecture belonging to the period of the Delhi Sultanate. It is a magnificent gateway built by Ala-ud-din Khilji. It has exquisite inlaid marble decorations, and latticed stone screens.

**Which were the important ports and towns during the time of the Sultanate?**

During the reign of the Sultanate of Delhi, both internal and external trade flourished. As a result, many ports and towns were built. Firuz Shah alone was said to have built over two hundred towns during his reign!

Of all the cities, Delhi was undoubtedly the biggest. In fact, it was the largest city in all the eastern Islamic states. Other important towns and ports were Bharuch, Cambay, Multan, Agra, Kanauj, Debal and Surat.

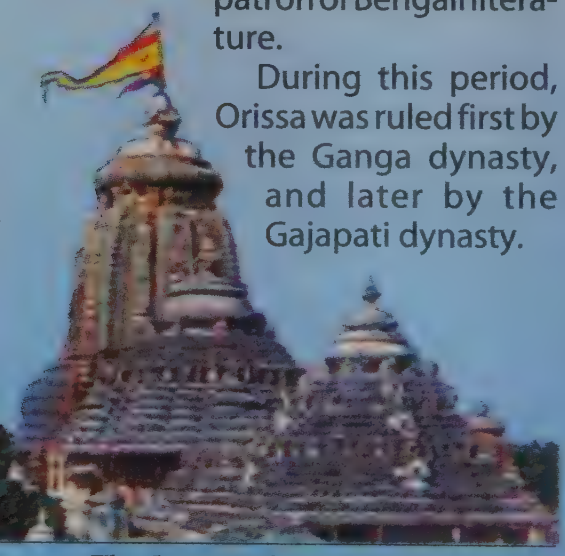
In the South, Calicut and Quilon were also important ports that existed during this period.

**Who ruled in the East during the time of the Delhi Sultanate?**

One of the best rulers in the East during the Delhi Sultanate was Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah. He ruled Bengal from 1389 to 1409 and was a great sultan of the early Iliyas Shahi dynasty. He earned a good name for his ideal character, patronage of learning and for good administration. He also had a profound regard for law, and was well known for his friendly relations with foreign countries.

Another important ruler was Alauddin Hussan (1493-1519), who established friendly relations with China, and was a great patron of Bengali literature.

During this period, Orissa was ruled first by the Ganga dynasty, and later by the Gajapati dynasty.



*The Jagannatha temple at Puri*

Medieval Orissa enjoyed a golden age under the Ganga dynasty. Its founder, Ananta varma Codagangadeva ruled from the Ganges to the Godavar with Cuttack as his capital. He began the construction of the temple of Jagannatha at Puri.

**What was unique about Mahmud Bergarha?**

The most famous Sultan of Gujarat during the medieval times was Mahmud Begarha. He ruled for more than fifty years from AD 1459 to 1511. He was called Begarha, which means 'Two Forts' because he captured two of the most powerful forts in Gujarat.

During the long and peaceful reign of Mahmud Begarha, trade and commerce prospered. He constructed many inns for the comfort of the travelers. The roads were made safe for travel. Under Mahmud Begarha's rule the Gujarat kingdom reached its zenith, and emerged as one of the most powerful and well-administered states in the country.

Mahmud Bergarha was unique in his appearance and in his habits. His beard reached down to his waist, and his mustache was so long that he wrapped it around his head like a turban!

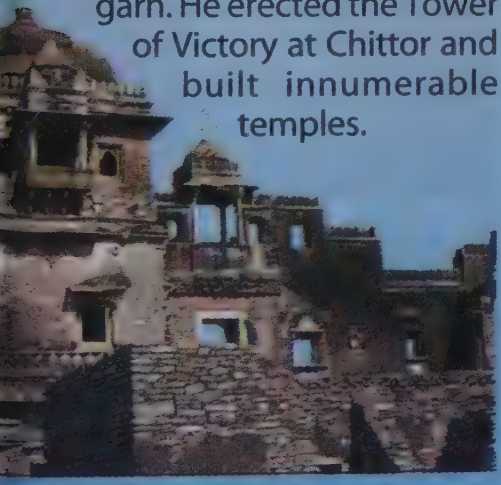
**Who was the important ruler of Kashmir during the 15th century?**

**Zainul Abidin was a powerful king of Kashmir from 1420 to 1470. While he came to the throne, Kashmir was under ruins in consequence of the Mongol invasion, earlier in 1320. He is being remembered for bringing back peace and prosperity to kashmir.**

**Why were Rana Kumbha and Rana Sanga considered the most famous rulers of Mewar during this time?**

Rana Kumbha was the ruler of Mewar, a state in western India, between AD 1433 and 1468. His reign was one of expansion and consolidation. He was a great general, and defeated the Sultans of Malwa and Gujarat.

Kumbha was a remarkable ruler. He built the forts at Kumbalgarh, Achalgarh, and Mandalgarh. He erected the Tower of Victory at Chittor and built innumerable temples.



*Rana Kumbha's palace at Chitorgarh*

Rana Kumbha was a scholar of Sanskrit and a fine musician. He wrote several commentaries on musical treatises, and he made Chittorgarh a dazzling cultural centre, whose fame spread right across Hindustan.

Rana Sanga who reigned from 1509-27, was a warrior and a man of great chivalry and honor. His reign was marked by a series of continual battles, in which he is said to have lost one arm and had been crippled in one leg and received eighty four wounds on his body! The last of Rana Sanga's battles was against the Mughal invader, Babur, in 1527.

He is the finest example of the Kshatriya king as the protector, whose focus is on consolidating and developing his state.

Rana Sanga is regarded as the last Hindu emperor of medieval India who could stand up for the principle of independence and 'rashtra' against the march of the Mughals.

## Who were the Yadavs?

The Yadavas ruled Devagiri during the reign of the Chalukyas and Rashtrakuta rulers. Devagiri was the name for Daulatabad, which was the region of the Deccan during the medieval period.

Bhillana-V Yadava, prince of the Yadava family made a bid for supreme power in the Deccan by revolting against the Chalukyas in 1187. Soon, he started ruling the whole country north of the Krishna.

Bhillana then founded the city of Devagiri which means abode of Gods. Thereafter, the dynasty founded by Bhillana Yadava-V was known as Yadavas of Devagiri. Bhillana-V next, concentrated on making the Yadavas a powerful dynasty.

## Who were the Kakatiyas?

The Kakatiya dynasty was a South Indian dynasty that ruled parts of what is now Andhra Pradesh, India, from 1083 to 1323. It was one of the great Telugu kingdoms that lasted for centuries.

Ganapathideva was the greatest of the Kakatiyas, and the first after the Satavahanas to bring the entire Telugu area under one rule. He put an end to the rule of the Velanati Cholas in AD 1210.

Ganapatideva's reign lasted for 62 years. It is one of the most brilliant epochs in the history of Andhra. Though Ganapatideva was alive until 1269, he handed over the threads of administra-

*Warangal Fort, built by Ganapatideva and his daughter Rudrama.*

**Why was Singhana a famous Yadava King?**

**Under Bhillana's grandson Singhana, the dynasty reached its height, and his kingdom covered western Maharashtra and parts of Madhya Pradesh too. He gained fame as the Yadava king who conquered the maximum territory.**

*A temple at Halebid, built by the Hoysalas.*

tion to his daughter Rudramadevi in AD 1262 itself and retired from active politics.

On the death of Rudrama, her grandson Prataparudra, who was adopted by her as her son and heir, ascended the throne at the beginning of the year 1280.

In 1323, Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq sent his son Ulugh Khan to defeat the defiant Kakatiya king. Ulugh Khan's raid was repulsed, but he returned in a month with a larger and more determined army. The unprepared and battle-weary Kakatiya army was finally defeated. King Prataparudra was taken prisoner, and this marked the end of the Kakatiyas dynasty.

**Why are the Hoysalas remembered to this day?**

The Hoysalas were a family that ruled from about 1006 to about 1346 in the southern Deccan, and for a time in the Cauvery Valley. The capital of the empire was initially based at Belur, but was later moved to Halebid.

The dynasty, founded by a tribal chief Nripa Kama, is well remembered for the beautifully carved temples of Belur, Halebid, Somanathapur, Shravanabelagola and others. The Hoysala kings were famous for their religious tolerance. They were also great patrons of art and culture.

The main rulers of this dynasty were King Vishnuvardhana and Vira Ballala-II. Through Vishnuvardhana's expansive military conquests, the Hoysalas achieved the status of a real kingdom. He wrested Gangavadi from the Cholas in AD 1116, and moved the capital from Belur to Halebid.

Vira Ballala-II was the greatest monarch of the Hoysala Empire. During his rule, the kingdom consolidated to the extent of being called an independent empire.

*The Temple complex at Halebid*

## Why is Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan considered a great Pandyan ruler?

The early Pandyan kingdoms declined with the rise of the Cholas in the 9th century, and were in constant conflict with them. The Pandyans allied themselves with the Sinhalese and the Cheras in harassing the Chola empire, until they found an opportunity for reviving their fortunes during the late 13th century.

*The Brihadeswara temple*

Sundara Pandyan-1 burnt the Chola towns of Tanjavur and Uraiyur, and shot into prominenece. But the Pandyans really entered their golden age under Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan who expanded their empire into Telugu country and invaded the northern half of Ceylon. He defeated the Hoyslalas, the Kakatiyas and the Pallavas.

## Who was the famous traveller who wrote about the Pandyans?

Much of our knowledge about the kingdom of the Pandyans comes from the writings of Marco Polo, a Venetian traveller. He was very impressed by the wealth of the Pandyans, and wrote that the king wore more than a city's ransom worth of gold and jewels.

Marco Polo was amazed by the horses he saw-more than two thousand thoroughbreds were imported from other kingdoms!

He described the court, and the ordinary people, and also explained the custom of burning a king's attendants on a monarch's funeral pyre so that he would be well served in the next life too.

# THE BAHMANI AND VIJAYANAGARA KINGDOMS

## How was the Bahmani kingdom established?

When Muhammad bin Tughlaq was still reigning at Delhi, the nobles of the Deccan rose in rebellion against him. They made Ismail Mukh the Afghan, one of the nobles, the king of the Deccan.

Ismail was old and was not able to rule. So, he handed over power to another noble Hasan Gangu Bahman Shah.

Hasan Gangu got the title of 'Ala-ud-din Bahman Shah' in 1347. The kingdom of Bahman Shah came to be called the Bahmani kingdom.

## Why did the Bahmani king go to war with the Vijayanagara kingdom?

The Bahmani and Vijayanagara kingdoms were constantly at war over the control of three main areas. These areas were the regions between the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers, the Krishna-Godavari Delta area, and the Konkan coastline.

The reason for this continuous conflict was that these areas were very fertile, and also contained important ports. Though the Bahmani king Mohammed Shah I attacked Vijayanagara and plundered its capital, he could not hold on to it. His successor, Mujahid could not capture Vijayanagara either, though he tried twice.

*Hampi, the capital of the Vijayanagara kingdom*

*A Madrasa (religious school), built by Mahmud Gawan at Bidar.*

## Who was Mahmud Gawan?

The most distinguished figure of the Bahmani kingdom was Mahmud Gawan, who was the principal minister of the state-Amir-ul-ulmra for over two decades. He fought many wars, subdued many kings, and annexed many territories to the Bahmani kingdom. Within the kingdom, he improved the administration, organized finances, encouraged public education, reformed revenue system, disciplined army and removed corruption.

Mahmud Gawan was a man of character and integrity and he was held in high esteem by all. A Deccan group of nobles were against him though, and plotted his downfall. After his death, the Bahmani kingdom declined.

## Which were the kingdoms created when the Bahmani kingdom broke up?

The Bahmani kingdom finally broke up into five smaller kingdoms–Ahmadnagar, Bijapur, Berar, Bidar, and Golconda.

Ahmednagar was founded in 1494 by Ahmad Nizam Shah. It was one of the Deccan sultanates, which lasted until its conquest by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in 1636.

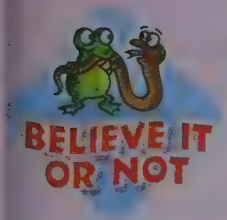
After the breakup of the Bahmani state, Ismail Adil Shah established Bijapur, an independent sultanate. It was located in south western India, straddling the western Ghats range of south-

*The Golconda fort*

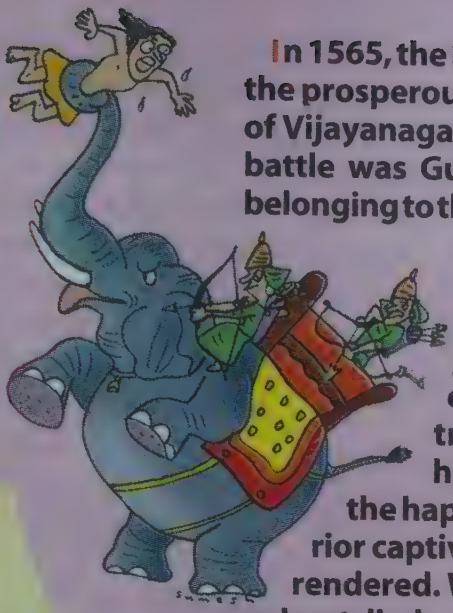
ern Maharashtra and northern Karnataka.

The sultanate of Berar was established 1490. Bidar was the capital of the Bahmani Sultanate from 1425 until the sultanate's breakup after 1518.

After the collapse of the Bahmani Sultanate, Golconda rose to prominence as the seat of the Qutb Shahi dynasty around 1507. This dynasty was the first Muslim

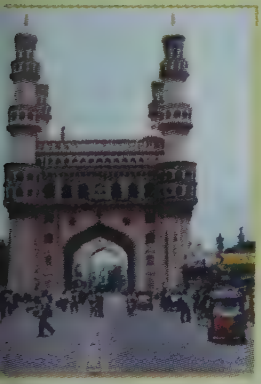



## A JUMBO SIZED WAR EFFORT!



**In 1565, the Persian army attacked the prosperous South Indian capital of Vijayanagara. But the hero of the battle was Gulam Ali, an elephant belonging to the Persians. This clever pachyderm won the battle for his masters by snatching up Rajah Ram, the enemy commander in his trunk and lifting him high into the air. He held the hapless and terrified warrior captive until his troops surrendered. When this amazing elephant died years later, grateful citizens erected an elaborate tomb for him in the city of Ahmednagar.**

dynasty to rule the Telugus. The Qutb Shahi rulers were great builders and patrons of learning. They not only patronized Persian culture, but also the regional culture of the Deccan, symbolized by the Telugu language as well as Urdu.



*Charminar, built by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah*

### Why did the founders of Vijayanagara give it this name?

The Vijayanagara empire rose in southern India in the 14th century. It was founded by two princes of the Sangama dynasty, Harihara and Bukka in 1336. They were actually ministers of the ruler of Kampili in Karnataka. The Sultan of Delhi, Muhammed-bin-Tughlaq captured them and sent them back to Karanataka to suppress revolts there. The brothers, then formed the Kingdom of Vijayanagara after defeating the Sultan.

The capital was named 'Vijayanagara' which means 'the City of Victory'; in honour of the grand victory they had scored against the Sultan of Delhi. Later, the empire also was called by this name.

## Why is Krishnadeva Raya considered the greatest King of Vijayanagara?

The Vijayanagara kingdom

reached the pinnacle of its glory during the reign of Krishnadeva Raya. He led many wars and extended his kingdom from Cuttack in the east, to Goa in the west, and from the Raichur Doab in the north, to the Indian Ocean in the south. Krishnadeva Raya encouraged trade with the western countries.

He was not only a great warrior, but was also a playwright and a great patron of learning. Literature, painting, sculpture, dance, and music were greatly encouraged by him and his successors. The famous scholar and wit Tenali Rama adorned his court.

During this period, there was also a spurt in architecture. The famous Vithalswami temple and the Hazara temple, both at Hampi, were built during his reign, and are magnificent specimens of Hindu Temple architecture.

## Why was the city of Vijayanagara considered one of the most beautiful of those times?

The city of Vijayanagara flourished between the 14 th century and 16th century. Most of the city lies on the south bank of the Tungabhadra River. The natural setting for the city is a hilly landscape, dotted with numerous granite boulders.

The Tungabhadra river ran through it, and provided protection from the north. There were arcades and magnificent galleries for the bazaars, and rising above them all was the

*Statue of Krishnadeva Raya*

palace of the king, surrounded by many rivulets and streams flowing through channels of cut stone.

The principal buildings were constructed in the regular Hindu style, covered with ornamental carvings. The whole city was full of gardens, and because of them, the circumference of the city was ninety-six kilometers.

*A temple at Vijayanagara*

**Why were the architectural styles of the Bahmani kingdom and Vijayanagara considered quite different?**

The Bahmani dynasty's first citadel, before the capital was shifted to Gulbarga, was at Daulatabad. Here, the most prominent feature is the extraordinarily imposing outer walls, in four concentric rings.

The earliest Bahmani mosque, the Shah Bazaar Mosque at Gulbarga was built around 1367. Later, the Bahmani Jami Mosque was constructed at Bidar. These mosques provided the model for almost all mosque construction in the Deccan.

The early Bahmani tombs are simple square domed chambers characterized by low flattish domes, and sloping walls. Later Bahmani architecture had triple tiers of arches.

During the period of the Vijayanagara empire, a number of temples, monuments, palaces and other structures were built over South India, with the largest concentration located in its capital. In addition to building new temples, the empire also added new structures and made modifications to hundreds of existing temples across South India.

Vijayanagara temples are usually surrounded by a strong enclosure. Large temples have tall towers or rayas built with wood, brick and stucco. Large life sized figures of men, woman, Gods and Goddesses adorn these towers. The Vittala temple has musical pillars that produce the sounds of musical instruments when tapped.

# THE ARRIVAL OF THE EUROPEANS

## Why did European traders search for new trade routes to India?

India had always been a magnet for European traders. Her riches were legendary. Her spices and sugar, her silks and cottons, her precious stones and sandalwood, were eagerly sought by the west since ancient times.

Since then, trade between India and Europe had flourished. Arab merchants bought goods such as spices, precious stones, cotton, and sugar from India and sold them for very high prices in European markets. These goods

were taken in caravans by land through the city of Constantinople. Trade routes in the Red Sea were also controlled by the Arabs. In 1453, Constantinople was captured by the Ottomans.

## Who were the first Europeans to come to India?

**For some time, the Portuguese, among other Europeans, had been looking for a sea route to India. However, they had been unable to break free of the control that the Arabs had over trade between Europe and Asia.**

**In 1487, the Portuguese navigator, Bartholomew Dias, rounded the 'Cape of Good Hope', and actually entered the Indian Ocean. Later, in 1497, an expedition of four ships under Vasco da Gama headed out to India and reached its shores of India in slightly less than eleven months' time. The arrival of the Portuguese introduced an im**

Turks. They stopped the caravans passing through, and trade came to a halt. The Europeans now found it necessary to find a new sea route to India. It was obvious that the first country to find this route could control the trade.

Towards the end of the 16th century, Europeans discovered new sea routes to India. The Arab intermediaries were no longer needed, and Europeans started coming to India as merchants.

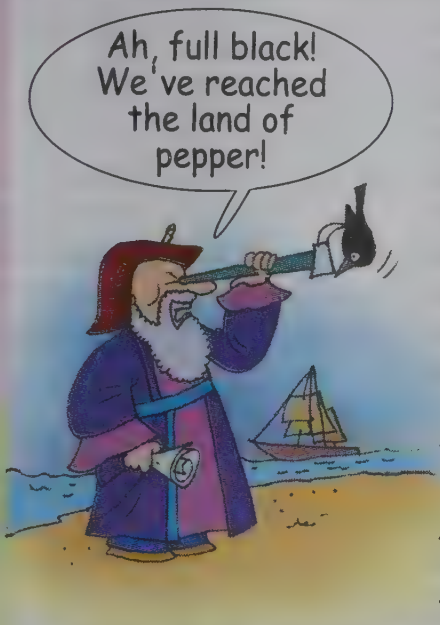
**portant new factor into Indian history- it underlined the importance of naval power.**

**In time, the Portuguese established several trading centres, and took over some territories in India. In fact, their influence gradually extended over 19,000 square kilometres of the Indian coastline.**

## How did Vasco da Gama reach in India?

The first European sailor to touch India was Vasco da Gama, a twenty-eight year old Portuguese navigator. He lived from 1460 to 1524 and was sent by King Manuel-1 of Portugal to discover a sea route from Portugal to India.

At the time, many people thought that Gama's trip would be impossible, although an earlier explorer, Bartholamew Dias had actually entered the Indian Ocean after rounding the Cape of Good Hope in Africa.




Gama sailed from Lisbon, Portugal, on July 8 1497, heading to the East. He had a fleet of four ships and he himself commanded one of them, the São Gabriel. He rounded Africa's Cape of Good Hope, and by December 16, the fleet had passed the point where Bartholamew Dias had turned back.

Vasco da Gama was now sailing into waters unknown to Europeans. He made many stops in Africa. Finally he reached Calicut in India, on May 18, 1498.

## Who was the first Portuguese Viceroy in India?

Dom Francisco Da Almeida, the first viceroy of Portuguese India, was born into a distinguished family at Lisbon about the middle of the 15th century. In March 1505, he was appointed by King Emmanuel-1 as Viceroy of the newly conquered Portuguese territory in India.

*Vasco da Gama*

Da Almeida set sail from Lisbon in command of a large and powerful fleet. On his arrival in India, he took up his residence at Cochin. He strengthened the Portuguese fortifications on Cochin and those on the island of Angediva. He also constructed St. Angelo Fort in the Kannur district of Kerala state in India in AD 1505.

Almeida built more forts in India, but relied mainly on his fleets to secure control of all sea trade. The most important events of Almeida's brief but vigorous administration were the conclusion of a commercial treaty with Mal

## Why is Fort Emmanuel in Kochi famous?

**Fort Emmanuel in Kochi has gained a place in history as the first fort in India to be built by the Europeans. Do you know how it came to be built?**

**In 1500, there were two rival kings at the coast of Malabar, the Zamorin of Calicut, and the Maharaja of Cochin. This was the time when the first Portuguese ships landed at the Malabar coast. The Maharaja of Kochi felt threatened by the Zamorin at Calicut, and he hoped that the Portuguese would help him against the Zamorin. So he welcomed the Portuguese, and al**

acca, and the discoveries made by his son Lorenzo, who acted as his lieutenant. Lorenzo was probably the first Portuguese who visited Ceylon.

In 1509, Almeida became the first Portuguese to set sail in Bombay. Almeida, commanding a fleet of 23 ships, inflicted a decisive defeat on the joint fleet of Arabs, Egyptians and Indians in the naval Battle of Diu on February 3, 1509. On the 1st of December 1509, he set sail for Europe with an escort of three vessels. On the voyage, the fleet called at Table Bay, then known as Saldanha Bay, to procure water, and here, Almeida was killed.

**lowed them to set up their first trading centre in Kochi.**

**The territory granted to the Portuguese 1503 by the Rajah of Kochi, would be later known as Fort Kochi. He also gave them permission to build a fort near the waterfront to protect their commercial interests. This fort was called Fort Emmanuel.**

**The Portuguese ruled for almost 160 years before the Dutch came and plundered the territory from them.**

## CLARIFICATIONS & CORRECTIONS

*It is our policy to correct errors, and present differing views and clarifications about the contents in previous issues. Please send in your feedback, mentioning the title and page number.*

### IMPORTANT COMMENTS

**Mr.** S.M.Mathur from Lucknow, formerly Director of the Geological Survey of India and CSIR Emeritus Scientist, writes to offer some important comments on the issue titled *The Earth*.

- Page-1. The figure of 21% land is incorrect. It is 29%.
- Page-8. The cosmic explosion took place 10 to 20 billion years ago, and not 'million' as printed.
- Page-14. The correct term is 'Mohorovicic', and not Mohorovic as printed.
- Page-20. Photo of rocks: The right picture is of sedimentary rocks and not sedimentary 'basin'.
- Page-27. Pluto should not have been considered a planet, dwarf or otherwise.

*(In 2006, the debate on the status of Pluto led the International Astronomical Union, the recognized authority in naming heavenly objects, to formally classify Pluto as a dwarf planet)*

*-Editor*

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# I Wonder Why?

The question of the month

Aren't there many little things you have wondered about, but didn't know whom to ask? Send us your questions, and we will give you the fascinating reasons behind the incredible mysteries of life.

## Why does our temperature go up when we have fever?

The increase in our body temperature during illness is commonly called fever.

It occurs in response to infection by a pathogenic organism or to types of physical injury. When a person becomes infected with bacteria, the white blood cells recognise the incoming pathogen as foreign, and initiate the first stages of the immune response. Then, white blood cells release a variety of proteins called cytokines that are central to the immune and inflammatory response. These cytokines cause an increase in body temperature.

They also cause the production of other chemicals in the brain. These chemicals react very strongly with the hypothalamus area of the brain which then sends a signal to the body to increase its temperature. The mechanisms that the brain employs to effect this are uncertain, but include increasing the metabolic rate and even inducing shivering.

Since these two processes burn metabolic fuel faster than normal, body heat is given off. Experiments have shown that the growth rates of various types of bacteria are slowed at temperatures above normal body temperature.

MANORAMA TELL ME WHY-INDIAN HISTORY

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